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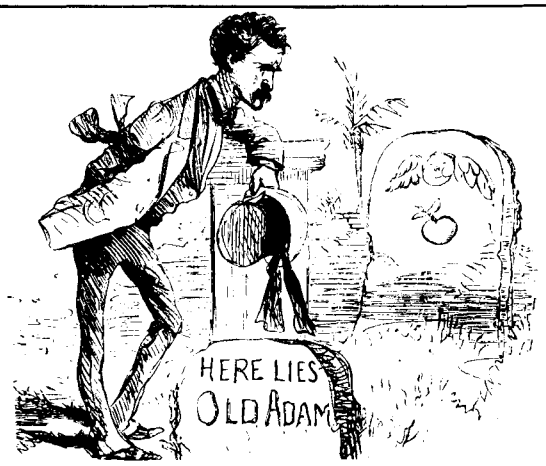

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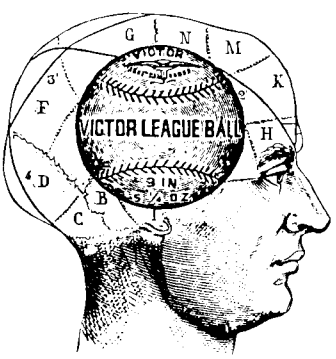

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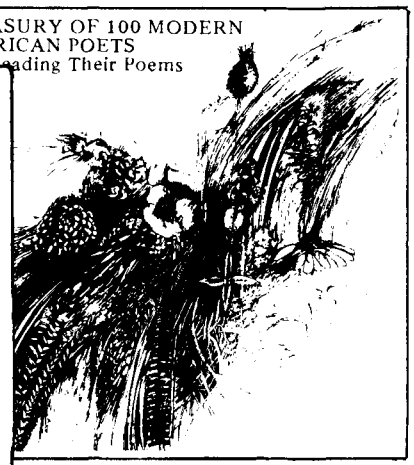

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Out of My Mind

Ernst Mach and the Quarks

JEREMY BERNSTEIN

For over thirty years I have been an Ernst Mach buff. This is not because Mach was taught in the Rochester, New York, public school system where I received my primary education, and even in the New York City private school where I "prepared," as they say, for Harvard. It happened, rather, that the first real course I took in physics, in the spring of 1948, was taught by Philipp Frank, who had, as Einstein once remarked, "imbibed Mach with his mother's milk." Professor Frank had even talked with Mach personally on at least two occasions that I know of. One of them occurred sometime after Einstein had invented the special theory of relativity in 1905. I would guess that it must have taken place in 1910. As Professor Frank explained it to me, he was summoned to see Mach in Vienna, where they both lived and where Professor Frank was then a *privat dozent* in physics at the university, to explain to Mach the mathematician Hermann Minkowski's then brand-new—and quite radical—four-dimensional formulation of the theory of relativity. I recall Professor Frank's telling me that Mach was not very enthusiastic about it. He also told me that Einstein, after studying Minkowski, remarked that now that the mathematicians had gotten hold of his theory he couldn't understand it himself anymore. The second encounter with Mach took place a few years later and also involved Einstein, but this time in person. The subject of that meeting had more to do with the main subject at hand: why Mach, for most of his scientific working life, denied that atoms exist.

JEREMY BERNSTEIN is currently a Visiting I. I. Rabi Scientist in the Columbia University physics department. His forthcoming book, *The Information Age*, is a profile of the Bell Telephone Laboratories.

But before I get into all of that, I should say, for the benefit of the non-Mach buffs, just a little about who Ernst Mach was. I might say, parenthetically, that, as far as I know, there is only one full-scale Mach biography, *Ernst Mach: His Life Work and Influence* by John T. Blackmore. Mach, who died in 1916, did not want a biography written of him, and his son Ludwig, who had collected material for a biography, apparently destroyed it during World War II. Blackmore, however, was able to interview some of Mach's living relations as well as a few of the men of Professor Frank's generation who had had some direct contact with Mach. Mach is, at the present time, I think, not even one of those figures who is "oft quoted but rarely read." He is not much quoted and almost never read.

Mach is known to most of us, if at all, because of the so-called Mach number, which is the ratio of the speed of, say, an airplane to the speed of sound. It is so named because of Mach's work on supersonic projectiles. He managed to photograph the shock waves caused by such a projectile—a speeding bullet—in 1886. Physiologists have very likely encountered Mach bands, which have to do with shaded bands that appear if one looks at, for example, white and black rotating discs and that represent neurological inhibitions rather than objective optical phenomena. Cosmologists continue to discuss Mach's principle but rarely can agree as to exactly what it is, let alone whether or not Einstein's general theory of relativity and gravitation fulfills it. But it is unlikely in the extreme that many of them have read Mach's historical polemic, *The Science of Mechanics*, first published in 1883, in which Mach attacks the foundations of Newtonian mechanics. This book, Einstein wrote near the end of his life, "exerted a deep and persisting influence on me." It helped to

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liberate Einstein from the Newtonian idea that space and time were absolute, and Mach's ideas about the relativity of acceleration, which are connected to what has become known as Mach's principle, surely influenced Einstein when he began to think about acceleration and gravity.

Be that as it may, Mach was not really a great physicist—great compared to such of his contemporaries as Einstein, Max Planck, and Ludwig Boltzmann. He was even less a mathematician. He once wrote, "Set theory [for example] has long been beyond me. The reason goes back to the weakness of my youthful training in mathematics which, unfortunately, I have never found the opportunity to correct." Nonetheless, Mach had a very profound impact on the scientific and intellectual life of his day and on the people he met. For example, William James encountered Mach in Prague in 1882, where Mach was then teaching in the German university. After hearing Mach lecture, James wrote to his wife: "I don't think anyone ever gave me so strong an impression of pure intellectual genius. He apparently has read everything and thought about everything, and has an absolute simplicity of manner and winningness of smile when his face lights up that are charming." Professor Frank, who certainly regarded himself as a Machian, took great pleasure in pointing out that Lenin had written an entire book, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, to refute Mach's brand of positivism. It appears that one of Lenin's objections to Mach was that in certain situations in physics he was prepared to eschew the notion of force.

Mach, who was born Ernst Waldfried Joseph Wenzel, on February 18, 1838, in the Austro-Hungarian town of Chirlitz near Brunn, the capital of Moravia, was not exactly a child prodigy. At the age of nine he was enrolled in a Benedictine gymnasium near Vienna. His performance was sufficiently bad for him to be invited to leave a year later. Mach, it appears, was singularly mediocre in Latin and Greek grammar. He recalled having particular difficulty with the sentence "Initium sapientae est timor domini" (The beginning of all wisdom is the fear of God). The Benedictine fathers classified him as "sehr talentlos"—more or less hopeless. Fortunately, Mach's father, Johann, functioned professionally as a tutor, and he proceeded to tutor young Mach at home, occasionally shouting at him such imprecations as "Norse brains," or "Head of a Greenlander."

About this time Mach decided that he would like to become a cabinetmaker and move to America. For two years Mach was apprenticed to a cabinetmaker in a nearby village and acquired a lifelong fondness for making things. His book *The Science of Mechanics* is full of drawings of odd machines, which, one imagines, were constructed by Mach or his assistants. At the age of fifteen he returned to the gymnasium. Of that time he later wrote: "With respect to social relations and the like I must have seemed extremely immature and childish. Apart from my slight talent in this direction, this is to be explained to some extent by the fact that I was fifteen years old before I ever engaged in social intercourse, particularly with students of my own age. . . . At the beginning things did not go especially well, since I lacked all of the school cleverness and slyness which first have to be acquired in these matters."

Mach was able to enter the University of Vienna in 1855, and in 1860 he took a doctorate in physics there. Then in 1861 he became a *privat dozent*—the same unpaid lecturing position that Professor Frank held a half century later. It is interesting to note the level of physics that was practiced at the university by Mach and others. In 1842 the Austrian physicist Christian Doppler proposed on theoretical grounds what has become known as the Doppler effect: the now well known fact that as, for example, a source of light or sound waves is moving toward a person, the pitch or frequency of the wave increases. This is so obvious to us now—we test it routinely by listening to the sound of automobile horns—that it is hard to imagine that it was once a highly controversial bit of physics, even twenty years after its invention. (The Doppler shift, by the way, was tested in Holland a couple of years after its invention by the Dutch meteorologist Buijs Ballot, who had a railroad flatcar loaded with trumpet players towed at various speeds while musicians with absolute pitch were stationed on the ground to testify if they heard any alterations in frequency. This was done, it appears, for two days, and the Doppler shift was confirmed.)

One of Mach's own professors, Joseph Petzval, even claimed the Doppler shift was im-

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possible since it violated what Petzval had called the "Law of the conservation of the period of oscillation." In 1860 Mach built a simple device to demonstrate the Doppler shift in sound. In essence Mach's apparatus consisted of a long tube that was free to rotate around a central axis. A whistle, or reed, was made to sound in the tube by forcing wind through it. The Doppler shift became evident if one stationed oneself in the plane of rotation of the tube, and it would disappear if one stationed oneself on the axis of rotation. This became a standard bit of teaching apparatus in central Europe. Yet even in 1878, eleven years after Mach had moved to the German university in Prague, the Doppler shift was still the subject of controversy. That winter Mach persuaded a group of students and professors to sit on a hill overlooking the train tracks and to listen to the whistles of moving trains. Afterward they signed a document testifying to what they heard.

None of this is great or, indeed, even very important physics. The true importance of Mach was in his skeptical attitude toward much of the received wisdom in the physics of his day, combined with his ability to write and lecture about such matters with extraordinary clarity. It is also true—and this I will try to make clear—that this skepticism when applied to the atomic theory, while certainly reasonable in its origins, eventually caused Mach to run somewhat amok. Before indicating how Mach got into the atomic question, it is worthwhile to recapitulate briefly the status of the atomic hypothesis as it stood in the middle of the nineteenth century. The first thing to be clear about is that the atomic hypothesis was just that—a hypothesis. No one had ever seen an atom; indeed, various arguments had convinced physicists and chemists that atoms, if they existed, would have to have the incredible size of about 10^{-8} centimeters—what we believe to be about the size of a typical atom. In fact, there were at the time really two kinds of atoms, the physicists' atom and the chemists' atom, and most of the mid-nineteenth century physicists and chemists believed that these were distinct. In his *Principia,* Newton had declared himself an atomist when he wrote: "The extension, hardness, impenetrability, mobility and inertia of the whole, results from the extension, hardness, impenetrability, mobility and inertia of the parts." By "parts" he meant the indivisible atoms. This concept of matter, and in particular of gases, was used by Newton's younger contemporary Daniel Bernoulli to explain how gases exert pressure—namely, by the random collisions of the invisible gas particles with the sides of the gas container. The chemists, especially beginning in the nineteenth century with the work of John Dalton, were interested in using the atomic hypothesis to explain certain regularities observed in chemical reactions: the fact, for example, that when carbon and oxygen combine, they do so in definite proportions by weight that can be explained if we think of individual carbon and oxygen atoms, or molecules, hooked up to one another. In this picture the actual sizes and masses of the atoms are irrelevant; Einstein commented on this in his *Autobiographical Notes* when discussing Mach's views: "In chemistry only the ratios of the atomic masses played any rôle, not their absolute magnitudes, so that [for the chemists] atomic theory could be viewed more as a visualizing symbol than as knowledge concerning the factual construction of matter."

To earn his living at the University of Vienna, Mach gave lectures on physics to medical students. These were published in 1863 under the title *Compendium of Physics for Medical Students.* Some years later he described what happened. "In the year 1862, I drew up a compendium of physics for medical men, in which, because I strove after a certain philosophical satisfaction, I carried out rigorously the mechanical atomic theory. This work first made me conscious of the insufficiency of this theory, and was clearly expressed in the preface and at the end of this book, where I spoke of a total reformation of our views on the foundations of physics."

In his *Compendium* Mach had taken the atomic hypothesis as a given and, in terms of it, had attempted to give a unified explanation of the several branches of physics. He had run into trouble—trouble that he kept more or less to himself—especially when he tried to use the classical atomic theory to explain the spectral lines, the discrete colors of light, given off by heated gases. Of this work he later wrote: "My attempts to explain mechanically the spectra of the chemical elements and the divergence of the theory with experience

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strengthened my view that we must not represent to ourselves the chemical elements in a space of three dimensions. I did not venture, however, to speak of this candidly before orthodox physicists." In actual fact Mach did not have a prayer of explaining the line spectra before the invention of the quantum theory. Niels Bohr's work, which did provide an explanation of many of the features of the spectra of at least the simple elements, was done fifty years later in 1913. Exactly what Mach meant by giving up the three-dimensionality of atoms I am not sure, but I am sure that it had nothing to do with the modern quantum theory in which atomic sizes and shapes are discussed in terms of wave functions that are not, in general, functions in three dimensions.

After 1863 Mach more or less abandoned original research in physics for his work in physiology and psychology, although he continued to think and write about the philosophical and historical foundations of physics, and he produced the books that caught the attention of Einstein and his generation. As is often the case in these matters, there was an almost inevitable intellectual collision between Mach and this new generation of physicists—Einstein, Boltzmann, and Max Planck among them. These people began to take the atomic hypothesis extremely seriously as an essential foundation for their work in statistical mechanics. In 1895 Mach returned to the University of Vienna, but in a chair of philosophy. The year before, Boltzmann had been given a chair of physics there, so the stage was set for an intellectual confrontation. Boltzmann's general temper and wit can be gauged by the title of a lecture he proposed to give to some philosophers, namely, "Proof that Schopenhauer Was a Degenerate, Unthinking, Unknowing, Nonsense Scribbling Philosopher, Whose Understanding Consisted Solely of Empty Verbal Trash." (I am indebted to my colleague John Bell for calling this splendid lecture to my attention. It can be found in the English translation of Boltzmann's collected works.) Boltzmann wrote: "I once engaged in a lively debate on the value of atomic theories with a group of academicians, including Hofrat Professor Mach, right on the floor of the academy [of science] itself. . . . Suddenly Mach spoke out from the group and laconically said: 'I don't believe that atoms exist.' This sentence went round and round in my head."

In debates like this Mach was fond of asking "Haben Sie einen gesehen?" (Have you seen one?)—an interesting and not entirely trivial question. It is sometimes said that Boltzmann's suicide at the age of sixty-two in 1906 was caused by Mach's criticisms of his work on statistical mechanics and of his use of the atomic hypothesis. Professor Frank, who knew Boltzmann—and often told me that he thought that Boltzmann was the most mathematically brilliant theoretical physicist he had ever known—thought that this was complete nonsense. "It is said that Boltzmann was so desperate about the rejection of atomic theory by physicists, resulting from Mach's attacks on it, that he took his life," Frank wrote. "As a matter of fact this could hardly be true, since Boltzmann was himself, philosophically speaking, rather a follower of Mach. Boltzmann once said to me, 'You see it doesn't make any difference to me if I say that the atomic model is only a picture. I don't mind this. I don't require that they have absolute real existence. . . . "An economic description," Mach said. Maybe the atoms are an economic description. This doesn't hurt me very much. From the viewpoint of the physicist this doesn't make a difference.' " Toward the end of his life, Boltzmann, who had been afflicted by recurrent fits of depression, nearly lost his vision and was suffering from excruciating headaches; and when he became convinced that he could no longer work, he took his life.

Mach's relations with Einstein are rather more complex. From all accounts, Einstein began his career as a convinced Machian positivist. Einstein's analysis of space and time as being defined by operations with clocks and rulers—the analysis he presents in his 1905 paper on the special theory of relativity—seems, at first sight, to be a quintessential exercise in Machian positivism. But when one looks at things more closely, one begins to wonder. The clocks and rulers of the relativity paper are highly idealized. They are like clocks and rulers, but no actual clocks and rulers are exactly like them. In later years Einstein said that the fact that these clocks and rulers were not, themselves, treated as moving atomic configurations rather than hypothetical fundamental entities was a "sin"

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that one had the obligation to "eliminate at a later stage of the theory." One wonders if Mach soon understood just how un-Machian Einstein's analysis really was. In any case, he surely must have understood that one of Einstein's other papers in the "miracle year" of 1905 was credited with being an important proof of the "existence" of atoms. This was Einstein's paper on what is now known as Brownian motion—after the nineteenth century Scottish botanist Robert Brown. Brown had observed that microscopic pollen grains, when suspended in water, appear to dance around indefinitely in an agitated random way. Einstein interpreted this as the result of the constant bombardment of these objects by the invisible water molecules, and, what was more important, he was able to make quantitative predictions about the nature of the "random walk" of the suspended particles—predictions that were soon experimentally verified. This convinced many of the skeptics that atoms indeed existed, but it did not convince Mach. No one, as far as he was concerned, had seen one.

The first contact between Mach and Einstein appears to have been in 1909. Mach, in the second edition of his book on the conservation of energy, written in 1909, adds a note in which he says, "I subscribe then, to the principle of relativity." In fact, he sent Einstein a copy of the book, and in his reply, Einstein gratefully refers to himself as "Ihr Sie verehrender Schüler" (your devoted student). Sometime around 1912—Professor Frank remembered 1913, but the dates don't appear to be consistent—a meeting between Mach and Einstein was arranged in Vienna. It may well have been Professor Frank who arranged this meeting, since he knew both men. Mach had had a stroke in 1898 that had permanently paralyzed the right half of his body, but he continued to work, even doing laboratory science with the aid of his son Ludwig. "At the University of Vienna," Frank wrote, "Mach had lectured on the history and theory of the 'inductive' sciences. . . . For more than twelve years [before this meeting], however, Mach had suffered from a severe paralysis and had retired from his position. He lived in his apartment in a suburb of Vienna, and occupied himself only with his studies and receiving occasional visitors. On entering his room one saw a man with a grey unkempt beard and a partly good natured, partly cunning expression on his face, who looked like a Slavic peasant and said: 'Please speak loudly to me. In addition to my other unpleasant characteristics I am also almost stone deaf.' " At the time of this meeting Mach was over seventy, while Einstein was just over thirty, and Professor Frank was in his late twenties.

The conversation concerned atoms. Einstein tried to persuade Mach to accept the atomic hypothesis on the ground that with it properties of gases could be predicted that could not be predicted without atomic theory. He argued that the fact that such predictions might require long calculations did not mean that this theory was not "economical." Mach's position had always been that theories were merely economical descriptions of observed facts. According to Professor Frank, Mach seemed willing to concede that such a theory could be economical in a logical sense, and it was Professor Frank's feeling that there had been a meeting of the minds. If there was, it didn't last long. After Mach's death on February 19, 1916, his son Ludwig found the following passage among his father's papers: "I do not consider the Newtonian principles as completed and perfect; yet in my old age, I can accept the theory of relativity just as little as I can accept the existence of atoms and other such dogma." Einstein wrote a eulogy to Mach in which he noted, "Even those who think of themselves as Mach's opponents hardly know how much of Mach's views they have, as it were, imbibed with their mother's milk." But in 1922 in a lecture in Paris, Einstein let his true feelings show when he said that Mach was "un bon mécanicien" but a "deplorable philosophe."

There are two footnotes to all of this. First, in 1903 an assistant of Boltzmann named Stefan Meyer invented an instrument called a spinthariscope. This was a device that produced scintillations when it was struck by an alpha particle. An alpha particle is a nucleus of helium and is emitted when some of the heavy nuclei, such as uranium, spontaneously decay. An alpha particle is, then, a helium atom that has been stripped of its electrons, and so one could argue that this detector is responsive to individual helium atoms. According to several sources, Mach was shown this device and, according to Meyer, who showed it to him, Mach then declared: "Now

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I believe in the existence of atoms." God knows what Mach actually said to Stefan Meyer, but for the next thirteen years he expressed his views on the reality—or non-reality—of atoms in an entirely unambiguous way. For example, in 1910, seven years after this alleged conversion, Mach wrote: "The results of the atomic theory can be just as manifold and useful if one is not in such a hurry to treat atoms as realities. Therefore all honor to the beliefs of physicists! But I myself cannot make this particular belief my own." What could be clearer?

The final footnote has to do with the title of this essay, "Ernst Mach and the Quarks." In some sense the quark is the modern physicists' atom. Quarks are the hypothetical constituents out of which the so-called "elementary particles" are made. A neutron, or a proton, for example, consists of three quarks of various kinds. One may ask what the word "consist" means here. In old-fashioned nuclear physics when one said that a nucleus consisted of neutrons and protons, what one meant was that, if one whacked the nucleus hard enough, out came neutrons and protons, like the beans out of a bean bag. This is not what is meant, if current ideas are correct, when one says that a proton consists of three quarks. If these ideas are right, then no amount of thumping of the proton will reveal three bare quarks. It will only reveal new particles that are themselves made of quarks. However, in many experiments, protons and the like behave just *as if* they were made up of three discrete quarks. Modern physicists are, by and large, not very philosophical, so I have not heard any Boltzmann-Mach-like debates on whether or not the quark exists. My guess is that it will continue to exist as long as the theory keeps working. We have, for better or worse, long stopped worrying about finding a positive answer to Mach's question, "Have you seen one?"

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Life and Letters

Unwilling to Relocate

ARISTIDES

Roughly seven years ago, at the age of forty, I resolved to stop complaining. This will seem rather less uplifting than it at first may sound when I go on to say that I was greatly aided in this resolve by having the ground for complaint swept out from under me by having almost everything in life I had ever hoped for. "I didn't have the two top things—great animal magnetism or money," F. Scott Fitzgerald once said. "I had the two second things, though, good looks and intelligence." I don't happen to agree with Fitzgerald's listing of the four top things. None of them in any case is listed among the assets I tote up as my own: a wife I adore, work that keeps me perpetually interested, good friends, good health, and (thus far along) supreme good luck. And, though this was not so easily admitted, I also like where I live.

I say that it was not so easy to admit liking to live where I do, chiefly because where I live is, well, a bit lacking in glamour, or so at least the world would judge. Not only do I not live in a world city; I don't even quite live in a city. I do not think myself a dull fellow, but I couldn't prove it by my address. One's address, as every clever real estate salesman knows, is an extension of oneself—partly for snobbish reasons, no doubt, but partly as well for quite valid ones. "Anywhere you go," an old saying has it, "there you are." I take this saying to mean that, drag your hide anywhere you like, the person inside it will stay the same—you will remain, immitigably, ineluctably, however reluctantly, you. Still, it is difficult to think one would regard oneself quite the same from, say, the terrace of an apartment in Rome overlooking the Spanish Steps, or a house in Mayfair, London, SW1, or a duplex in the sixteenth arrondissement in Paris as in, say again, my neighborhood in the southeastern part of Evanston, Illinois, the first suburb to the north of the middle western, very American city of Chicago.

I have been living in Evanston some thirteen years. Working in Chicago, I chose Evanston chiefly for its schools for my then young children. These schools turned out to be vastly overrated, but then to be overrated is perhaps the fate of almost all schools, while the rest are rated, correctly, as not very good. My children are grown now and gone, but I am still here. Thrice I have moved within the same neighborhood, and twice within the same block. I have in fact lived in three different but contiguous buildings on the same block. At one point during this time I was offered a teaching job at Northwestern University, which is ten or so blocks from where I live. "That's nice," said my mother, in a line that has always seemed to me to call for a Yiddish accent, which, owing perhaps to a mistake made at central casting, my mother doesn't have. "That's nice," she said, "a job in the neighborhood."

So far as I know no one very famous lives in Evanston. One of President Carter's sons lives somewhere in my neighborhood; but which son it is, what his name is, or where exactly he lives, I haven't any notion and even less curiosity. James T. Farrell does not live but is buried here, in a Catholic cemetery about two blocks from my apartment, but buried doesn't count. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union still has its headquarters in this town, yet that organization scarcely even seems good for a few of the easy guffaws writers such as H. L. Mencken used to be able to ring out of it during Prohibition days. I don't find myself dropping in on the ladies very often—actually, never—though I imagine them to be a fairly frail, if still vigorously vigilant, lot; and I almost admire them as advocates of the most completely lost of all lost American causes.

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The town of Evanston puts in a cameo appearance in Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March*, where, in the 1930s setting of that novel, it is made to seem, as all indications lead one to believe it was, rather stuffy and WASPish. Until the past twenty years, if someone said Evanston, one thought of brigades of women with blue-rinsed hair and print dresses, many of them walking with canes, dowager biddies strolling on tree-shaded streets.

Evanston, and particularly the neighborhood within it in which I live, is nowadays much more various—so much so that, though the town has a population of only 80,000, I hesitate to generalize about it. (As is well known, generalizations only hold up for populations of more than five million.) Even on the most fundamental statistical level, I am pristinely ignorant. I don't, for example, know how many Jews now live in Evanston, or how large a percentage of the population—a third? a fourth?—is black. I cannot begin to give you, as the demographers say, an age profile, an occupational profile, or an economic profile of the town. Although I have strong and fairly precise views about the future of NATO, I cannot tell you the name of my local alderwoman, yet I seem to remember that she is smallish and that she has a winning smile and that I voted for her. Such, then, is the extent of my hard knowledge about where I live; as they used to say on the playgrounds on which I grew up, it comes to diddly. I only know this—I like it here.

What is it one wants from the place where one lives? Status? As a younger man I felt the pull of status as urgently as the next fellow, but today I don't believe I would give up one whit of comfort in exchange for it. Nor would I be willing to pay a penny extra in rent or taxes for it, as do so many young people who pay six and eight and ten hundred dollars a month to live in a one-room studio apartment on the east side of Manhattan. The higher the status the higher the price, of course. In this connection I not long ago heard a story about a couple who was being shown a one-million-dollar condominium apartment on Sutton Place in New York, when the wife noticed that the apartment had no dining room. She mentioned this to the real estate agent, who is supposed to have replied, "Lady, what do you expect for a million dollars?"

If physical comfort and convenience is wanted in the neighborhood where one lives—I know I want it—so is a certain social ease. By social ease I do not mean the opportunity for exuberant sociability with neighbors, but an atmosphere of tolerance sufficient to allow one to go pretty much one's own way. I once owned a house in a working-class neighborhood, and while I felt fairly comfortable there, in time it became clear that my neighbors were not altogether comfortable with me. Although I think myself a plain enough bird, they thought me rather an odd duck. What was I doing among them, they wondered; and when it came time for me to move on, they worried lest I sell my house to someone even odder than I. The pond on which I now live provides much more comfort, for it is loaded with odd ducks, though we all seem to swim around in it comfortably enough.

"I pity the man," writes Laurence Sterne in *A Sentimental Journey*, "who can travel from *Dan* to *Beersheba*, and cry, 'Tis all barren—and so it is; and so is all the world to him who will not cultivate the fruits it offers." I do not know about the world, but most of the fruits I am likely to be offered will have to come from orchards and vineyards in my own neighborhood, where, I estimate, I must spend something like 98 percent of my time. Of course, I go into the city of Chicago to visit friends, to test the claims of restaurants, to contribute to the upkeep of dentists, physicians, accountants, and other middlemen. I travel both to New York and to Washington a few times each year on business; every second year or so I find myself in San Francisco; and when time and purse permit, I appear in Europe cleverly disguised as a tourist. But for the vast most part, I am at my desk at home, or running an errand, or teaching a class—carrying on my life within a space of roughly ten square blocks. "That's nice," my mother might have said, "a life in the neighborhood."

Not going to the city to work has made me, in a curious way, into a combination child and pensioner—the two types who also tend to stay in the neighborhood. Few housewives are among the regular cast of neighborhood characters; women, at least on my block, tend to go off to work, leaving children at either day-care centers or school and the retired and me at home. With the exception of a single house, my block is made up of apartment

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buildings. (Blocks of large older houses lie to the east.) The occupants of these apartment buildings change fairly often. Younger people especially seem to move on, perhaps climbing upward in the world, perhaps going under. The middle-aged seem to stay, and the older people appear to be in for the duration. As things stand at the moment, I look to be—in fact, I rather hope to be—in for the duration myself.

Since I attempt to take the measure of the people I see regularly walking the streets in my neighborhood, I wonder what other people, engaged on the same project, might make of me. Do they think: He seems a healthy enough fellow, what's he doing in the neighborhood during the working day. Maybe he's a remittance man, and owing to some dark scandal, his family sends him money to keep him from returning home. Maybe he's a minor Mafia guy—nothing so exotic as a hit man, but more likely someone from the Mafia's bookkeeping department. Maybe he just works nights. Or, then again, maybe he's mad.

The smart money would be on the last-named possibility, for, even though in this instance the smart money would (I prefer to think) be mistaken, there are a number of certifiably mad people walking around my neighborhood. I don't know what the current modern euphemism for mad is—disturbed? a-rational? dis-sane?—but mad assuredly is what they are. They are not bad-mad but sad-mad, and they live in a former residence hotel that is now called, euphemistically, the Evanston Ridgeview, A Quality Health Care Center. They are men and women who have been dealt dreadful hands in life; some have been cheated by their body's chemistry, some by the conditions of their upbringing, and some by the fragility of their temperaments, which snapped and broke on them. In one way or another, they have been ill-equipped for life, which they cannot take neat but only with the aid of heavy chasers of tranquilizing drugs. Thirty or so years ago they would have been packed away; now zonked to the hairline, they walk the streets. Now is better, but still no bargain.

They are a pathetic but not unedifying spectacle. One small emaciated woman, always smoking a cigarette with one hand and clutching a pack of Pall Malls with the other, walks by my apartment building daily. For reasons known only to her, she walks on the three or four inches of pavement that separate the gutters from the lawns. Another man, young and heavyset, appears to trudge about the streets all day long, no matter how vile the weather, a look of bewildered determination on his face. Sometimes a shattered man and woman from the Evanston Ridgeview will walk the streets holding hands, as sure an illustration as one is likely to find of E. M. Cioran's aphorism that holds love to be "an agreement on the part of two people to overestimate each other." One man wears a hat with a feather that shoots at least a foot into the air, above a face permanently red with suppressed rage; another man rides a bicycle that must have something like sixty pounds of accessories—horns, carriers, baskets, lights—attached to it. The women seem most devastated of all. Madness has aged them, stripped them of all vanity, so that they walk about with clashing clothes, clean but not very carefully groomed, de-sexed and deracinated from life itself. One day I was walking past the Evanston Ridgeview when I saw a sign announcing that they were planning a Halloween party—a Halloween party for the insane!—and I thought, wait a minute, who is crazy around here anyway? Still, while no one asked me, I am glad that the Evanston Ridgeview is in the neighborhood; it is a sharp and salubrious reminder of how close along the edge we all walk.

Sometimes people from the Evanston Ridgeview stop for coffee or a sandwich at a luncheonette called the Sher-Main. Despite their drug-induced, muddled state, they are, I note, always treated courteously there. The owner of the luncheonette, a Greek in his early forties, is a performing genius; the instrument upon which he plays is a three-by-four-and-a-half-foot griddle. On it he often has what looks to me like as many as eighteen or twenty lunches going simultaneously. Sometimes, at the height of the lunch rush, I have heard him talk to himself, to the food, to the griddle, keeping straight the orders while keeping his own adrenaline flowing. It is quite a performance.

But then, in a different sense, the clientele of his luncheonette provides quite a performance of its own. Along with the mad folk from the Evanston Ridgeview, on any given lunch hour it might include a booth of young house

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painters in bespeckled work clothes; two cops; a table of construction workers; a black criminal lawyer huddled in a booth with his client; a table of local merchants, at least one of whom (the owner of a huge and hugely successful fabric store) must be a millionaire many times over; while at the counter odd solitary diners perch, many of them reading newspapers over their cheeseburgers or fried-liver specials. The Sher-Main is distinctly not the sort of place into which Truman Capote is likely to walk.

Over the years one picks up scraps of information about local merchants. One of the regular diners at the Sher-Main, who owns a shop across the street and down the block from it, once told me that he left his father's business when, in his middle thirties, he overheard his father, on the telephone, tell a business associate that he couldn't hope to go on vacation, for he had no one whom he felt he could trust to run the business in his absence. I know the exercising regimen of the man who runs the fish store. The barber, an Austrian, takes winter skiing vacations, and his son, an osteopath, married this past spring. The woman who runs the shop where I drop off my shirts survived the Nazi death camps. The man at the post office is a White Sox fan; the pharmacist has a bad case on the Cubs. One of the young men who works part-time at the newsstand is a playwright.

From the time I first moved into this neighborhood, I brought my dry cleaning to Metz Dry Cleaners. For something like ten years I exchanged greetings with its proprietor. "Morning, Mr. Metz." "Friday will be fine, Mr. Metz." "Merry Christmas, Mr. Metz." For a decade at least I said, "Thank you, Mr. Metz." "You have a pleasant weekend yourself, Mr. Metz." "Happy New Year, Mr. Metz." Then, about three years ago, a silk blouse of my wife's was scorched by the dry-cleaning process. When I reported this to Mr. Metz, he said he wanted to send it out to a place where they might be able to fix it, but if it couldn't be done, he would of course pay for the blouse. He would, he said, telephone in a day or two. When I picked up the phone a few days later, I heard Mr. Metz's voice, except the voice said, "This is Don Welters at Metz Cleaners." *Don Welters*? You could have knocked me over with a plastic bag. For ten years he had allowed me to call him a name other than his own without bothering to correct me. Why? What's the difference, did he say to himself? If he wants to call me Metz, let him call me Metz, just so long as he pays his bills. Had he—has he?—so little in the way of ego that it didn't matter? Or, conversely, is his ego so strong that it didn't matter? Ten years. I still cannot quite get over it. It is one of those little shallow mysteries that life in the neighborhood is in the habit of providing.

Three doors up from Metz Dry Cleaners is a launderette where—once more to air my dirty linen in public—I drop off our sheets and towels. It is run by a young Korean family, judging from their English fairly recent immigrants to this country, and run very efficiently. In fact, the shop scene is very much looking up in the neighborhood. For a long spell we were under the blight of boutiques. During this period you couldn't travel twenty paces without tripping over a piece of macrame, an adorable plant, or a sprout sandwich. The shops in the neighborhood on the whole now seem rather more serious—that is, rather more useful—and therefore more likely to stay around for a while. I mark the end of the boutique era with the closing a few years ago of a store called Space Savers. It sold plastic kitchen shelving, collapsible file cabinets, and cardboard dressers, all designed, as the name of the shop suggests, to save space. After a very brief go, it folded itself up and, saving still more space, disappeared entirely.

A few quasi-antique, quasi-used-furniture stores have moved into the neighborhood; so, too, have a resale shop and a shop whose proprietress does clothing alterations. In a more modern mode, a shop selling and renting video movie cassettes has moved in; and a block or so away from it we now have a store selling computer software. A few doors down from the latter is a shop selling running gear, for ours is a neighborhood in which the religion of the body finds many devotees. On the subject of religion, there is also a small headquarters for the Church of Scientology, which, my guess is, has many fewer followers than the Church of Joggology. Video movie cassettes, computer software, running gear, scientology—my short-winded and low-tech body has never darkened the doors of any of these shops.

We have a new and quite good used-book store a block or so from my apartment, which I

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greet as mixed news. The town of Evanston has a number of good used-book stores and a superior academic bookstore called Great Expectations. I owe a great deal of my education to roaming about such stores, and I sometimes think that the institution of the used-book store may have contributed more to the general education of the populace than has the institution of the university. Yet I have come to think of these stores as the equivalent, for intellectuals, of pool halls. I at any rate find it difficult not to hang around them, looking not only for that important book at that perfect price but for the equivalent of a fast game—that is, a fast schmooze about books. I should, I tell myself, spend my days reading and writing books, not buying and certainly not talking about them. But I am weak. Oh, Lord, I ask, lead me not into Great Expectations.

I don't have to ask not to be led into Wulf's Grocery, for I am fearful of going in there. About Wulf's I have a bad conscience. I used to go into Wulf's at least once a day, picking up a head of lettuce, a carton of milk, a box of cereal—the odd item or two. Being a desk-bound man, I always look for an excuse, any excuse, to break away for a few moments. ("The great thing about the law," the writer and lawyer John Mortimer's father told him when he, John, was thinking about writing full-time for his living, "is that it gets you out of the house.") Except for Mrs. Wulf, a very winning Irish-born woman, the crew at Wulf's is not riotously chummy, and it seems as if it took me about twelve years to get on friendly terms with them. Then, once I did, once I learned about the butcher's television-watching habits, the produce man's son who plays second base for the University of Michigan, and Mrs. Wulf's father in Ireland, I up and left them. An enormous supermarket moved into the neighborhood, and I began to take my custom there. True, the supermarket provided more varied and better food than Wulf's and generally at better prices; true, logic and good sense and sound financial management argue for my shopping at the new supermarket. All true and too true—and yet I still feel a betrayer. I have not gone into Wulf's for nearly a year now, and clearly there's no going back. Hoping that they assume I have moved, I walk most gingerly, stealthily, guiltily past the store.

This neighborhood has ghosts. I speak of dead friends who walked and drove its streets and whose presence I still sharply feel. It is bittersweet to pass corners or walk into shops where one habitually met them. I think of my friend Walter, for example, whom I used to notice each Sunday morning walking past my apartment on his way to buy his three or four pounds of *New York Times*. I would also see him parked out in front of Wulf's, awaiting his wife who was shopping within. Invariably, I would climb into the backseat, and a lovely talk would be set out before me, a hardy stew of reminiscence, erudition, and whimsy, in all three of which Walter specialized. When he was alive, I liked, when coming home late, to drive past and note the light in his window; it meant he was probably watching late night television, no doubt some talk show, and with his deadly comical eye spotting pretension, fraud, and fifty-seven other varieties of public phoniness. Walter, I used to think, is standing guard.

If Walter was witty and skeptical, my friend Nelly, who lived a block and a half away in the other direction, was lively and, in her seventies, committed to the cheerful view. She was an immensely gregarious woman who was forced, in violation of her nature, to live most of her life alone. She wore bright colors and drove a red car—on principle. She, too, worked at home. Nelly was a freelance editor. Although for her own good reasons she chose to keep it hidden, she was filled with learning. She had gone to Smith College in the 1920s, knew languages, seemed to have read everything thirty years before, had perfect pitch, and she carried it all with a most gracious lightness. We were always running into each other in the neighborhood: in front of the newsstand, in one of the drugstores, in the post office, on street corners. She passed Tolstoy's test of a beautiful face: she was loveliest when smiling, which she did nearly all the time. Now, three years after her death, at certain corners, on certain streets, in certain shops, I recall my friend and neighbor Nelly and feel a tug of pleasure at the recollection and a twist of resentment at her absence.

A spectre of another kind haunts these streets. It is that of crime. Crime in the neighborhood comes and goes, in small waves. The worst was a few years ago, when the middle-aged man who ran the Main Street News

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Stand, while closing up for the night, was held up and ultimately murdered for the eighty or so dollars then in his till. A few nights later a young woman in the neighborhood was raped and murdered. Suddenly the neighborhood seemed a very frightening place, in which paranoia seemed the most sensible conduct. A year or so later, when silver prices were inordinately high, there were a number of burglaries, several of them committed by young kids, who then tried to sell the stolen silver to local dealers. Every so often one will hear about a mugging or a purse snatching, and once a rapist was loose in the neighborhood. The neighborhood newspaper has run stories about youth gangs, black and Spanish, hanging out at night along Main Street. More recently, in a building directly across the street from the one I live in, a man was stabbed thirty-one times—need I say "to death"—on a sunny Saturday afternoon. Speculation has it that it was a crime of passion, but, since the murderer hasn't been caught, no one except him knows for certain.

An acquaintance, a young man of some sophistication, recently told me that he, too, likes living in Evanston. Unlike other suburbs farther to the north of Chicago, he said, there was about Evanston a big city sense of danger, and this, he felt, wasn't altogether a bad thing. While I don't quite agree with him—I think it is a pretty damn bad thing—I know what he means: namely, that there is something urban, contemporary, *real* about crime, and that people who live in safe suburbs, somehow sealed off from it, are living in a most unreal dream world. Yet I wonder if there is much to choose from between an unreal dream world and a quite real nightmare one.

Crime is certainly not new, but then neither does one ever grow accustomed to it. Perhaps, though, it is at its most sinister when one nearly does grow accustomed to it—when one assumes that this is the way it is, this is the way we live now. A friend who lived for years on West End Avenue in Manhattan not long ago told me that it was only with his move to the East Side that he recognized how over the years he had conditioned himself to accept the cruddiness of crime all about him on the West Side—how he had acquired the almost instinctual moves enabling him to thread his way around gangs, addicts, and other menacing characters—and what a relief it was to unlearn these moves. They order these things worse in New York, and my neighborhood cannot compare to West End Avenue, but, nevertheless, returning home late at night, I look over my shoulder. Crime as a regular fact of life—as opposed to what it ought to be, an aberrant fact of life—is one of the great wicked sadnesses of our time. Along with cancer, heart attack, and stroke, one now has to consider death at the hands of a vicious young man or a crazed drug addict as one of the "natural causes" of death.

But it is the natural causes of living that interest me more and make me like this neighborhood so much. It is its variety, its jumble, that impresses me. My pleasure in it also proceeds from the nature of neighborhood life itself. People one is likely to pass without turning one's head on a crowded downtown street become of interest in a quiet neighborhood. Janitors, for example. When I first moved into the neighborhood the majority of the janitors were Belgians, with names such as Paul Tenard and Marcel Noorts. They worked very hard and, judging from the cars they drove, made quite good money. Russian émigrés then moved into some of these jobs. A father and son combination—Appalachians, my guess is—has taken over the janitorial work in a few of the local buildings. The janitor of the building in which I live is a young Pole. One day he asked me if I had any publishing connections, for he had written a book. The book, which I have read, is on martial arts training and has since been published. Janitors who are published authors—in the last fifth of the twentieth century you can no longer so easily tell a man by the cut of his clothes.

Many of the people whom I have watched walk up and down my block for more than a decade I have never spoken to, yet one learns something about them merely by noting them in the course of their comings and goings. There is the mild-mannered man, who looks to be approaching sixty, the story of whose life appears to be that he has stayed behind to care for his very elderly and quite deaf mother. There is the small man who at seventy or so wears his hair in bangs and, though he lives in a modest enough building with his wife, has a penchant for Cadillacs, especially Cadillac convertibles, which he buys in either white or cream color and parks in a garage behind my

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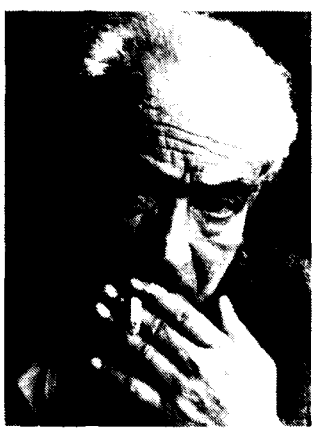

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apartment. There is the man who each day chugs down the street in a motorized chair—because of a stroke? a weakened heart?—on his way to the supermarket, where each day he exchanges eight empty A & W Root Beer bottles for eight full ones. There is the scruffy but handsome man who hires out as a window washer and whose face on some days is scarlet—with anger? drink? poor health? I know not what. And there is the man who one day, quite drunk, put a most improper question to me and thus feels—quite rightly—that he can never speak to me again and consequently hasn't.

Joggers trot by this block, and men and women in helmets and black Spandex shorts, members of bicycle clubs, pedal past in a whir. The neighborhood's young are keen to stay in shape. Early mornings, from my kitchen window, I see runners going through stretching exercises before setting off. At dusk, after a full day's work, others chug past, upon their faces looks of determination, exhaustion, and, when the run is over, sweaty bliss. Four blocks to the east, the paths beside Lake Michigan are jogger laden, especially on Sunday mornings, and sometimes one can hear pairs of joggers discussing their major organs or the aerobic benefits they are acquiring while in the very act of acquiring them. All such talk I have come to think of as joggorrhea.

Live in a place long enough and you come to know not only the people but the livestock. This neighborhood has a hardy squirrel population, which roams about assured of the goodwill of all but the neighborhood cats. Edith Wharton once called cats snakes in furs; I am inclined to think of squirrels as rats with bushy tails, but then Rodentia is not my favorite taxonomic order. For a long spell large dogs seemed to be *à la mode*. So much was this so in the early 1970s that, if you lived in my neighborhood, you might have thought a basic nuclear family consisted of an unmarried young man and woman living together with an Irish setter. Neighborhood dogs now seem to be growing smaller. I note the resurgence of the cocker spaniel, which was very popular when I was a boy and came in black, beige, or auburn and was predictably named, respectively, Inky, Taffy, or Rusty. A kindhearted woman named Florence, who always greets me most friendlily, keeps a little white dog named Sammy on a long rope leash. A number of my neighbors have dogs of truly impressive inelegance; small black hairless dogs, hugely overweight Labradors, stub-legged dogs whose ears stand straight up—dogs that only their owners could (and apparently do) love. Seeing these owners standing out in below-zero weather, awaiting, with plastic bag or the instrument indelicately known as the pooper-scooper, their dogs' completion of their business is a tribute to—I am not sure what. Solzhenitsyn says that anyone who cannot be kind to an animal is unlikely to be kind to a human being. I admire these dog owners without in any way wishing to emulate them.

The center of the neighborhood, both geographically and spiritually, is the intersection of Chicago Avenue and Main Street. A bank occupies two of the corners of the intersection; a used-furniture store a third corner; and the Main Street News Stand the fourth. This intersection takes its character from the time of day: crisp and hurried in the morning, quiet for much of the middle of the day, tired yet rushed at day's end, slightly fearsome late at night. Of its four corners, easily the most interesting is the one that serves as the site of the Main Street News Stand, which is not precisely a stand but a small one-story building. Along with local papers and popular American magazines, it stocks out-of-town papers, foreign magazines, business and intellectual journals. It also sells lottery tickets, a large line of paperback books, and, off in a corner near the rear of the building, pornographic books and magazines. On a number of occasions I have watched a dark, expensively dressed, middle-aged man make his way to the porno section; he drives a luxe version of a BMW; he appears to be making something like a porno pit stop on his way to the richer suburbs to the north. I used to mark his appearances with some interest until I realized what my doing so made me—a voyeur of a voyeur—and then I knocked it off.

I seem to have stressed the oddity of the neighborhood, its freakishness and dramatic qualities. While I prize its oddity, true enough, I value above all its stability: its nice dull stretches, its long, quiet afternoons, the evenings on which nothing at all happens. I like the comfort and regularity it provides of dealing with the same mailmen, shopkeepers,

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bank clerks, barbers, and shoemakers I have dealt with now for years and years. These are important people to me; they see to those mundane things without which life could not go on—at least not anywhere near so smoothly. I delight in the small pleasures of greeting neighborhood friends, of nodding at nodding acquaintances. When I think of it—which I don't often do—I am immensely impressed at the complexity of arrangements required to lead even the simplest life.

And, being a trifle thick-headed perhaps, I am regularly surprised by the obvious. One hot day the young man who has our neighborhood as part of his route for one of the air express companies was in my apartment to pick up a manuscript. I asked him how he was holding up in this hot weather. A man in his middle twenties, with blond, longish hair, and a tattoo on each forearm, he replied: "I don't mind the heat. It's summer, and summer is supposed to be hot. I really love the spring and the fall. Actually, I also dig the winter. I guess I like the whole year. In fact, if you really want to know, I like it above ground." That is nicely put, and a sentiment to which I wholly subscribe. I, too, like it above ground, and, luckily for me, above no piece of ground more than the one on which I spend the better part of my life, this neighborhood.

The Land of Nod

ALICE WIRTH GRAY

Dreams of pure spirit
are other people's dreams.
Animal animas appear as guides.
Lobsters befriend them in rocky times,
or their dreams are in French,
or painted in archaic style on vases:
objets d'art. You couldn't hire a guide
the hot spots my dreams go.
No gallery will hang my dreams.
I don't go my nightly journey
with friendly totems.
There are no areas of abstract color,
pure form. Along my way
to dreamland are gas stations
you need keys to use the rest room.
You wouldn't want to get out of the car,
not even run down the window
in my dreams.

ALICE WIRTH GRAY's poems have appeared in the *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Poetry*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

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Daddies

JAMES L. CALDERWOOD

So sweet a girl at Smith she was Miss Plath
Until she donned her flaming hair
And ate men like air It had to do she said
With Daddy going too soon big toe and all
Into the sackcloth sea quick to become
That cold mad feary father who waked
His Annie dear her great blue bedroom scarce
A cloud and sent her off in tears to Wicklow
First she felt then she fell but he
He waved his way high up the Thames and cried
In ermine madness Nothing will come of nothing
I'll never see that face of hers again
For we have no such daughter and off he went
Sailing the wine-dark sea to windy Troy
And home again to see the purple cloth
His wife laid down become the purple blood
That set Electra's hair aflame she used
Orestes like a knife to carve up wanton
Mommy yet nary a sign of Daddy showed
So when dawn came in her London flat she rose
And left her children bread and milk and stuffed
The cracks with towels and said How old
And old it's sad and old and Daddy you
I fear are not in your perfect mind to think
These ancient ladies all and I myself
To be your child And yet I am I am
Daddy you bastard I am I am and she knelt
Before the stove and said Carry me along
Taddy like you done through the toy fair
And spread her red red hair in the oven
Like an offering in a small pine box
And fumbled for the switch.

✪ JAMES L. CALDERWOOD is professor of English at the University of California, Irvine. He is the author of three books about Shakespeare.

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Tradition and the Generations

On the Difficulties of Transmission

EDWARD SHILS

THE PRESENT AGE is said to be a traditionless one, although some of its critics say that it is not sufficiently traditionless. It is, however, impossible for any age to be wholly traditionless. No society could exist if its members had not had the benefit of traditions. They could not have created their language; certainly they could not by themselves have created a language which resembles the language of their ancestors. And once they share that language, they share very widely many of its referents, the insights it affords, and its distinctions and overtones. The living members of any society could never have created all their governmental institutions, all their laws and their methods of making laws; nor could they have created, without any prior knowledge of existing technology, the entire technology by which they work on nature. They could not have created—entirely by themselves, and beginning from zero—the landscape as it exists at any given moment and the pattern of roads and other lines of transportation. Although it is true that much of the stock of language, governmental institutions, laws and methods of making laws, technology, landscape, and lines of transportation has been added over any period of thirty years or twenty or even ten years, those innovations move from a received point of departure from a tradition, a great deal of which remains fairly intact, and without which the present situation could not have conceivably been reached.

Many human beings are quite content with this situation. They might or might not like the substance of these traditions in particular respects, but they do not bridle against them. They accept much of the situation in which they live, and the fact that it bears some resemblance to what existed in the past does not render it less acceptable. It perhaps even helps to make it more acceptable.

EDWARD SHILS is professor of sociology and social thought at the University of Chicago and honorary fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge. He is editor of *Minerva: A Review of Science, Learning, and Policy.*

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If we look at some of the deeper and more intimate spheres of life—the spheres of domestic and sexual life, of religious beliefs and institutions, of knowledge and appreciation of literature, art, and science, and of entertainment—we find that the situation in these spheres is not very different from that which obtains with respect to those spheres of life which are regarded as more external. Much that has come into the present from the past century or two has been steadily reproduced, with some modifications, into the present, across the generations. There is also innovation in each of these spheres. In literature, art, and science, new works, new ideas, new forms, new substances have appeared, although the older works continue to be read, seen, and appreciated, and their ideas make up part of the present stock.

Innovations occur in every sphere of belief and conduct and in patterns of organization. The innovations do not occur equally in all parts of any society. Large proportions of the population adhere more or less to the beliefs which their elders adhered to; in many of their actions, they act more or less in ways in which many members of their society acted seventy-five or fifty or twenty-five years ago. They go to work each working day, attend church services fairly frequently, even if not weekly; they are married, reasonably faithful to their spouses, and fairly attentive to and solicitous about their children. They remain attached to the political party that they began to support thirty years ago and to which the parents of many of them inclined earlier. They work regularly, if they have the opportunity to do so; they attempt to live within their means. They are moderately patriotic, gaining gratification if their country has a high standing in the world with respect to its achievements in any particular sphere of activity. They are moderately respectful of the authority of the state; they are generally law-abiding. They are not rebellious against the very notion of doing particular things and believing in particular ideas simply because they were done and believed in the past. Some of them, in fact, think that it is good and right to act and to believe as those in the past acted and believed—as long as these actions and beliefs from the past are not inconvenient or especially uneconomical. Others are less adherent to traditional ways, and still others follow a quite anti-traditional tradition.

These practices and dispositions, which maintain patterns of action and belief from the past, are more common in the older generation than they are in the younger ones. Numerous investigations in the United States, Great Britain, France, Western Germany, and other countries bear witness to this difference between generations. Although the proportion of persons with a "traditional" outlook in each age-group is often substantial, there is a more or less steady decrease as one moves downward from those persons sixty and over, through those between

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forty-five and fifty-nine years old and those between thirty and forty-four years old, toward those between fifteen and thirty years old. The decline in traditionality from the older to the younger age-groups does not, however, necessarily mean that the members of the younger age-group will retain their present relatively indifferent or hostile attitude toward traditional beliefs and conduct when they become older. If this were to be so, fifty years from now the adherence to traditional patterns of belief and conduct would very much be reduced among those who will then be sixty and over, in comparison with the extent of adherence of those who have been over sixty years of age during the past decade and a half. On the other hand, if the present degree of adherence to traditional patterns among those who are between fifteen and twenty years of age were to persist until they become sixty, and if the same differences between age-groups as now exists were to persist then, there would be very few persons adhering to traditional patterns of belief and conduct by the end of a century.

The latter is, however, very unlikely to be the case for one very important reason. Traditional orientations become more salient as individuals grow older. Not all of those in the younger generations, whose actions and beliefs are relatively untraditional, will continue to be so untraditional as they grow older. Even if there were a unilinear trend toward untraditionality, that trend could not be demonstrated from the evidence of the existing differences between the aged and the young at any particular time. Nevertheless, the possibility of such a unilinear trend toward untraditionality or toward the establishment of an anti-traditional tradition over the past century and a half cannot be overlooked. But even if this trend exists, it is certainly not moving very quickly toward complete realization.

There are limits on the possibility of such a thoroughgoing attrition of traditionality. One limit is that human beings cannot live utterly independently of all traditions; such a thing is physiologically, linguistically, technologically, and intellectually impossible. The other chief limitation is that there are many human beings who, through strong inner necessity, cling to the beliefs and conduct into which they were inducted in their childhood and youth. They are sustained by this adherence. Respect for traditional religious beliefs and observance of the norms of conduct traditionally espoused by religious institutions and authorities comfort them and give them assurance. Life in a family is not experienced by them as a burden without valuable compensations. They have a need to respect authority in the large society. They want to live in an orderly world, and the institutions of church, family, and state give them the assurance that at least some parts of the world are ordered. Even—perhaps especially—if they are distressed by the actual condition

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of the world, they want to believe in the rightness of the normative order of the world. They want some fixed points of judgment; relativism or nihilism in standards of moral judgment is abhorrent to them. An anti-traditional tradition is not acceptable as a surrogate. They want to live in and believe in the primary institutions of family, church, and state; they believe in the value of their country and of their nationality.

This need to live in an ordered world is inherent in the human mind. It is so strong that it often causes those who are subject to this need to affirm institutions that are shaky and to accept beliefs that are not true according to "scientific" or "rational" arguments. There is also a tendency, which is not equally strong in all human beings, for this need to become more pronounced with advancing age.

II

These things being said, it is also undeniable that there are many persons who do not act in accordance with traditional patterns, who deny the validity or legitimacy of the institutions that require such conduct, and to whom traditional patterns of belief make no sense. There is no ground to be found in denying that this tendency has grown in our Western societies over many years.

General experience and systematic research show that the phenomenon of untraditionality or anti-traditionality is more common among those in their younger years than among those who are older. The traditional orientation has been under severe criticism for at least two centuries; in fact, the criticism goes back much further. In the present century, there has developed, alongside this criticism of traditionality made by progressivistic thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the proposition that traditionality is an outlook of the older generations, and that the desire for freedom from tradition and traditionality is natural to young persons. This assertion of the necessary association of youthfulness and anti-traditionality first appeared in the youth movement in Germany around the turn of the century; paradoxically, the youth movement often declared its independence from the traditionality of its elders by honoring much older Germanic traditions. In France the assertion appeared a little later, and there it took the similarly paradoxical form of criticizing the tradition of rationalism and scientism on behalf of patriotism.

In this relatively new variant of the criticism of traditionality, youth has been elevated into the position of being the representative of a new movement, rejecting the false idols of the recent past; the hope of overcoming a deadening traditionality has also been fastened on youth. Young persons themselves took up this program. The movements of the

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Wandervogel and of other currents of the youth movement around the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century were a self-conscious self-designation of the important cultural phenomenon of being distinctively youthful. There had been some more restricted manifestations of youthful self-consciousness early in the nineteenth century; literary movements, for example, accepted the designation of "youth" or "young"—for instance, "*Jungdeutschland.*" It was, however, only in the youth movement of the end of the last century and of the early part of the present century that youthfulness and the rejection of traditionality on behalf of "life," or "authenticity," "vitality," etc., became closely associated with each other. Youthfulness, "life," "vitality," and the rejection of tradition seemed to go naturally together.

There was some justification for the assertion that there was such a link. Young persons are, by their nature as newcomers into society, less committed to already-existent patterns of conduct and belief; they have not yet assimilated all the main traditions of their society; they are less at ease in them than their elders who have been living in them, the same elders who have contributed to their maintenance and who have benefited by them. The virtues of genuineness, spontaneity, freshness, and lofty aspirations have been put forward for contrast with the mature virtues of deliberate restraint, caution, and the inhibition of impulse and ambition. The former were believed to be characteristic of youth, the latter of more advanced age. This belief was to a large extent a creation of intellectuals. It was a view shared by some young intellectuals in the years just before and just after the First World War.

The idea of a conflict between youthfulness and traditionality was reanimated about a decade after the end of the Second World War. This time the movement took place on a much broader front. The earlier movement of youth against traditionality became more widespread, deeper, and more comprehensive. It was no longer primarily an intellectuals' affair; it spread among young persons in all sectors of society—to university students, young factory workers, office workers, and even schoolchildren. It became more expressive, more passionate. It became more active and sometimes even violent. The ideal of youthful spontaneity of expression and of the primacy of feeling and impulse was far deeper and less inhibited than had been the praise of "naturalness" in the youth movement of the early part of the century.

The culture and style of life of young persons had always been somewhat different from that of their elders. That was taken for granted. In the period since the Second World War, however, "youth culture" became a more recognized phenomenon, with its own patterns of consumption, its own institutions, its own music, its own commerce, and

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its own heroes. The spiritual resistance to incorporation into traditional institutions and beliefs has, of course, been very uneven, and it is far from universal, least of all in any extreme form, in the youthful generations since the 1960s.

There are intelligent and well-educated persons who welcome this movement against traditionality, and they would like to see it come to full culmination. They welcome youth culture; they do not see it as a passing phase in the life of the individual. They know, of course, that life consists of more than music of a certain type or certain bizarre modes of dress. Nevertheless they affirm the underlying tendency of the youth culture to strike out on a wholly new path without submission to the idols of the older generation. They would like all of society to be spontaneous and free from the oppression of institutions attached to the past.

These persons who sing songs of praise to youth culture have not given sufficient thought to what could be the result of the fulfillment of the anti-traditional trend of our society through the universalization of the more extreme forms of youth culture. They do not see what has been caused in many lives by aimlessness, fitful pursuit of intense but short-lived and destructive pleasures, and by an attitude of negation that is exhilarating at first but that ends in a joyless bitterness, except in the few who make a profitable profession of derogation or who do it with great talent.

The negative attitude toward the traditional institutions of society and toward traditional beliefs has sometimes been sustained by a political movement or by an ideological scheme. The political movements of anti-traditionality have often been pernicious in their consequences, but for their members they have afforded the satisfaction of being part of something larger than themselves; their members became "engaged"—for at least as long as the movement had not disintegrated or had not come to power with results that sorely disappointed them. Under these conditions, the movements of anti-traditionality have had some value for those who participated in them or who sympathized with them. The ideological transfiguration of negative anti-traditionality also has given a coherent picture of the world and a pattern of the right mode of life to those who could share it. It imposed a certain amount of mental discipline and it ordered their world, at least subjectively. Nevertheless, ideologies, taken seriously, are like straw fires—they flare up and die out. When these ideological straw fires die out, they leave their adherents in a condition of abject disappointment. For a time, at least, if they do not pass on to a more affirmative attitude toward traditional beliefs and institutions, they are left in a state of mind in which nothing has meaning or value.

The negative attitude toward traditional institutions and beliefs, not encased in an ideology or in a political movement, is a much more

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common phenomenon among the youth of Western societies. It is a condition of aesthetic revolt and a resistance to being incorporated, or being "co-opted," into the traditional institutions of family and work. Once the initial enthusiasm has been attenuated, it becomes a condition which the French sociologists have called anomie—a condition of normlessness, of purposelessness. It does not permit a satisfying membership in any collectivity. It isolates the individual, drives him toward transient pleasures that must be intensified constantly to be maintained. It demands an unending succession of quick pleasures. It causes routines to be experienced as sheer boredom. It allows no cumulativeness of experience and of becoming wise through reflection on that experience; it offers no prospect of quiet satisfaction. It causes regularity in domestic life, in friendship, and in work to be experienced as unbearably boring. The time between intermittent thrills and ecstasy is filled by a gnawing restlessness and discontent. These thrills and ecstatic states can only be intermittent at best, because it is not in the nature of thrill or ecstasy to be long lasting. Ecstatic or thrilling experiences are such only when they are occasional moments which break out of the routines of everyday life. They are bound to be intermittent, and the periods between moments of intensity, for people who live for such moments, are extremely distasteful.

It is one of the blemishes of contemporary societies that many young persons have fallen into anomie. They have become disconnected from institutions and from the beliefs that go along with them. This condition of disconnectedness gives those who have fallen into it no satisfactory routines of work or family, no long-term perspective of an occupational career, no satisfaction of family life, no satisfaction of forming a household and participating in the guidance of offspring. It is a condition of extreme or excessive individualism, of a hedonism on a treadmill of continuously receding pleasures.

Historically, the youth culture of the present day has a close affinity with the bohemianism that flourished among aspiring young artists and writers. Bohemianism, too, was a style of life rejecting bourgeois respectability, regular employment for wages or salary, regular domestic arrangements, regular attendance at religious services, moderate political views without the great passion of ideological political movements, and, above all, the philistine outlook that was indifferent to the great works of art and literature.

Each of the great cities of the world had its own bohemia around the turn of the century and continued to until after the Second World War. Robert Park once said that "bohemia" was "both a state of mind and a place." Bohemias were quarters of large cities, where bohemians could live near one another, where they could read or view each other's work,

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sustain each other by their common spirit of resistance to bourgeois morals and their devotion to the life of art and personal freedom. The bohemian mode of life, with its unconventional apparel, its disregard for domestic amenities, its enjoyment of the sense of community, was a forerunner of the youth culture of the present. Youth culture has gone very much further than bohemianism, but bohemianism and youth culture clearly belong to the same category of hostility to traditionality. The youth culture of recent decades is, however, no longer segregated, as bohemianism was, among a group of young writers and artists living in a particular quarter of a city. Although youth culture entails withdrawal from the routines of society, it now runs throughout the whole range and breadth of society. Youth culture is no longer even confined to youth.

Although in this age of relativism in moral judgments, it might seem that I am espousing or, much worse, attempting to impose the moral values of philistinism and condemning the free existence of the bohemian style of life. This is not so at all. I am condemning this bohemian style of life because it injures those who live it if they persist in it over a long period. Bohemianism is quite suitable for young persons and for those who wish to follow the free, institutionally unhampered life of artists and writers; writers, once they are moderately successful, usually renounce much of their bohemianism; the unsuccessful writers also usually renounce the bohemian mode of life as they grow older and, being unsuccessful, cease to write.

The culture which began as youth culture has ceased to be the culture of youth alone. Persons who were youths twenty years ago are no longer so youthful, yet they have brought many of the attitudes of youth culture with them into adulthood.

III

At the center of any relatively satisfying existence must be work in which reward is roughly commensurate with exertion and in which there is a discipline of punctuality and of competent performance. The individual's life becomes ordered around a life of work. The regular receipt of an earned income enables the individual who has earned it by his exertions to learn through experience that he must ration the pleasures that he can purchase through his income. Even where the work is not wholly gratifying, the regular receipt of income is itself gratifying. The purchase of the goods and services, scheduled through time, affords the prospect of future satisfactions. Except for a few geniuses in the art of leisure and consumption, regularity of work and reasoned expenditures of income are indispensable to an ordered life. They are also indispensable to the pleasures of leisure.

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One of the major problems of modern societies has been the inadequate induction of the younger generation into this kind of life. Where it is difficult for young persons to find work that provides the possibility of a satisfactory orderliness of life, a crucial stage of life is missed and its absence leaves a deficiency for which it is hard to compensate in later life. Once the equation of steady exertion and steady reward is prevented from coming into existence, the person who has never learned that equation has lost the opportunity of entry into a life of earned and moderate gratification.

If nothing has to be earned, then the objects of desire become limitless. The search for intense gratification becomes predominant. The prospect of moderate satisfaction holds no attraction for a person placed in this condition. After some years of searching for intense pleasures, it is not easy to acquire the discipline needed to work for rewards which bring only modest satisfaction.

The productivity of the modern economy, the strength of trade unions, improvements in the technology of communication, the common solicitude for the weak and unprotected, and the indulgent attitude of parents and their sense of powerlessness in the guidance of their offspring have led to a situation which is injurious to young persons in all of our Western societies. The improved income of employees of all sorts has rendered the earnings of adolescents no longer necessary in working-class families. More affluent parents of all classes can be more indulgent to their children. The absence of pressure to obtain employment on the one side, the paucity of opportunities for employment on the other make it very difficult for young persons to acquire the benefits of regular and remunerated work.

Not having seized the opportunity, or having been refused this opportunity, for assimilation into the outlook that accepts moderate satisfaction as a reasonable value, the victim of this deprivation—for victimization is what this spuriously happy condition is—is barred from the world of traditional institutions and beliefs. This encourages the demand for intense pleasures. The craving for intense pleasures renders the workaday world intolerable. As a result, the institutions which are part of the workaday world appear to be intolerably tyrannical and oppressive. The authorities who speak for the workaday world and the institutions with which they are associated become repugnant. The way of life which they recommend has no attractions. Rebelliousness and refractoriness, without an ideology and without a political movement, further aggravate the dissatisfaction.

Moral preaching, filled with clichés, is repellent to those who have eschewed or have been unable to enter the workaday world. The preachers, lay and ecclesiastical, speak to deaf ears. Insofar as they are

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heard at all, they sound like the enemies of intense pleasure. Their voices are regarded as the voices of killjoys, of the hard, puritanical authorities whom the young are already rejecting.

Young persons are indeed the victims—not at all, however, in the way in which radicals assert that they are the victims—of the capitalistic culture. They are the victims of a false idea of the good life. The falsity lies in the belief in the supreme value of intense, exciting, exhilarating pleasure and in the possibility of its complete attainment. It lies also in the belief that work is a burden and leisure without work an unqualified good. They are in fact the victims of the ideals which are distorted in the slogan "consumers' society" and which the more radical among them use as a criticism of present-day Western society.

IV

The desire and the capacity for intense pleasure are very great in adolescence and youth. Sensitivity, physical and mental, is at its height at this age. That is why the transition to adult life always encounters some resistance; the prospect of a life without unlimited, intense, and unqualified pleasure is extremely repulsive.

In addition to this displacement of desire onto intense pleasure, there is another reason for the aversion against traditional patterns of conduct and belief and against traditional institutions of family, work, religion, or state. This is the weakness of the authorities who purport to espouse traditional values. By weakness I mean visible uncertainty of conviction about, or even implicit disavowal of, the value of traditional institutions, conduct, and belief. It is not that all persons in authority—political leaders, clergymen, parents, school and university officials and teachers—unanimously and explicitly disavow the institutions for which they have legal and moral responsibility. Far from it. They do, nonetheless, not wish to appear to be "out of touch with the young." They, too, have been affected by the cult of youth. Unlike Max Weber—who in an address to German students at a time when youth was thought to possess salvationary powers, said, "I have never allowed myself to be impressed in any discussion by reference to dates recorded on birth certificates"—they have become impressed with the date of birth of those to whom they address themselves. In our contemporary Western societies, there has been a displacement of appreciation onto youthfulness. Youthfulness is viewed, from a romantic angle, as the best period of life, and the aspirations and demands of youth are treated as imperative. This is a view that is today widely shared. The old as well as the young accept it. Even where the older generation does not completely accept it, it does not want to be thought of as rejecting it.

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Those who are in powerful positions in political, economic, and cultural institutions in modern Western societies find themselves subject to much harsh criticism, to some extent simply because they occupy those positions of power. They are very sensitive to these criticisms; the attention which they give to polls of public opinion is obvious evidence of that. The criticisms are severe and diverse, because the most active and demanding members of modern societies, of all ages and strata, have a strong sense of their own dignity and rights, and they are correspondingly distrustful of authority. The powerful are by no means in total disagreement with these very attitudes which are so critical of them.

Here, too, the young generation is a victim, not of exploitation by industrialists and financiers, politicians and churchmen, teachers and parents, but of the lack of courage and forthrightness in these groups. So many concessions have been made to progressive ideas in the raising of children, in the construction of curricula in the schools, and in the flattery of the desires of the young, that the young have no grounds to respect them.

How could it be otherwise? The shuffling off of traditions, to the extent that it is at all possible, was not begun by the present younger generation. It has been going on for a long time, and the leading figures of the currently and recently dominant older generation in many institutions in which authority is expected to be exercised are themselves, in many respects, permeated by the outlook of anti-traditionality that censures them. Of course, they are not unqualifiedly anti-traditional, but they, too, hold traditional beliefs and institutions somewhat in suspicion, even while being attached to them and enjoying their benefits.

V

How can this cleavage be bridged? How can the young be addressed so that they will not be alienated from the traditions that are repugnant to them but that they need for their well-being? How can the experience of the older generation and the wisdom of many generations be communicated in an acceptable way to the young? Disregarding for the moment the difficulties of communication under present circumstances—when the young who receive attention are those who occupy buildings, spray slogans on walls, hold demonstrations and marches, and, at the most extreme, provide a reservoir from which terrorists are recruited—traditional beliefs and conduct cannot be shored up simply by addresses on television and interviews and articles in newspapers and reviews. The core of society has been the family, the school, the church, and, in a different form, the economy. If the authorities of those institutions which have been the main custodians and sustaining forces of traditional

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patterns of belief and conduct default on their obligations, can one expect much help from the others, including university teachers, who operate the institutions which form opinion?

The intellectuals—I have in mind primarily university teachers and literary men—are very crucial in this process. With the great increase in the numbers of young persons attending universities and other institutions of higher education, university teachers have acquired an influence on the opinion of the greatly enlarged educated classes that they did not possess earlier. At the same time, university teachers have been the principal objects of attack of the politically most active participants in youth culture. They have, however, contributed mightily toward it. University teachers, in particular, are in the most continuous and direct contact with the more intellectually interested sector of the younger generation. In the social sciences and the humanistic disciplines, attitudes hostile to tradition have now been nurtured and propagated for many years. About sixty years ago, Werner Sombart said sociology was an "oppositional science." This might not be true of sociology as such—leaving aside the question of whether it is a science—but it is certainly true of many sociologists. It is not true of all of them, but there can be no doubt that those sociologists who are oppositional—which means in opposition to traditional beliefs and actions—are even more so nowadays than they were in the past, when the socialistic opponents of the existing society laid great urgency on the transformation of economic institutions, even though they seldom thought of attacking the ethos of work.

The same is true, although to a lesser extent, in political studies. One major stream of denunciation of traditional patterns of belief and conduct flows from the humanistic disciplines, where new doctrines of literary criticism and an ill-understood sociology have been combined with a splatter of Marxism to provide the intellectual facade of a surreptitious offensive against traditional attitudes toward culture, authority, and society.

Perhaps it is like expecting the poacher to become the gamekeeper, or expecting the fox to become the watchman over the hen house, to say that the turning of the direction of the younger generation is dependent, at least as far as the more intellectual part of the younger generation is concerned, on university teachers. This would be a baseless hope if there were not many university teachers who are opposed in principle to these trends but who believe themselves to be powerless to stand out against their aggressively oppositional colleagues in matters of appointment and in the making up of the syllabi of courses of study.

University teachers are not alone in their responsibility and opportunities for speaking directly to the younger generation. Schoolteachers, especially teachers in the secondary schools, along with administrators

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in the schools and in governments, have no less great responsibilities and opportunities to guide the younger generation into a readiness to accept the tasks of living under the strain of obligations and to appreciate the possibilities of pleasure as a reward for the carrying out of obligations rather than as an alternative to it. Teachers and school officials have a great part to play in supporting those parents who are horrified by the detachment of their offspring from traditional ways. They also have a part to play in protecting the schools from being diverted from their proper paths. Employers, too, have a crucial part to play in finding employment for young persons and assimilating them into the ethics of conscientious work. Finally, politicians have their responsibilities cut out for them; they must not seek to placate the most anti-traditional blocs of their membership by turning the schools and universities over to them.

These are all necessary, but the brunt of the task of renewing and strengthening attachment to traditional beliefs and conduct belongs to the parents themselves, and the teachers, and, behind them, the educational administrators in schools and governments. Those who deal directly with the young must deal with them with transparent honesty and with an obvious faith in their own convictions. Young persons must be treated with respect and consideration, but they must not be flattered. They must be told of the dangers of some of the paths they follow, and they must be spoken to in a straightforward way, with understanding and sympathy.

This is the crux of the matter. The hostility against tradition is hostility against demands for the acceptance of obligation in family, work, society, and the state. Hostility against authority is hostility against those who demand the acceptance of obligations.

VI

I think it is inevitable that much of the practical wisdom of life that individuals accumulate in the course of many years of experience is bound to be lost. The wisdom of life is one of the most universally valid kinds of knowledge; it is not rigorously tested scientifically but is put into aphoristic and concrete form. It makes little sense to those to whom it is addressed and who have not had experiences of the kind and quality that have given rise to it. The same is true of written wisdom. It is best appreciated when enough experiences have left a deposit in memory. There is a continuous seepage of wisdom, because young persons are too inexperienced to have been able to create it for themselves and hence too unexperienced to accept it and to bear it in mind in their own subsequent actions.

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This has always been so. The world of the young, unencumbered by memories and reflection, has never been wholly the world of their elders, who have much stored in their memories. The two worlds are especially different nowadays, when the affluence of contemporary Western societies allows or even forces young persons not to have the experience of work. What was once thought to be privilege—the privilege of leisure—has become a burden on those who have received it and a hindrance to a satisfactory life.

VII

At present there are all sorts of substantive issues on which the younger generation seems to be separated from its elders: problems of the protection of the natural environment from pollution; the use of nuclear energy for the production of electrical power, defense, and disarmament; state grants for higher education as against loans. These are serious issues in themselves and very complicated ones. They are further complicated by the more general antagonism against the whole order of Western societies. This antagonism is not confined to youth, and it is certainly not characteristic of the whole of the younger generation.

It would be a mistake to think that if views on particular issues could be refuted, the fundamental anti-traditional attitude which underlies them would be dissipated. That fundamental attitude can be affected only by a shift in the balance of the diverse elements which make up the outlook of those who are at present so resistant to traditionality.

In every outlook, there are multiple possibilities of development. There are many conflicts among these elements within the minds of those who accept and those who actively espouse the outlook. There is a heterogeneity of outlook within each person; there are tendencies in different directions within the same mind. There is often a latent respect for traditions existing alongside a more ascendant anti-traditionality within the same person. Obviously the balance is not the same in all cases. There are, however, many persons whose courage and confidence in tradition would be strengthened by a more self-confident, more respect-worthy enunciation of the value of traditional conduct and traditional beliefs. And in strengthening these persons, we strengthen the hope for the future.

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In Search of the New Criticism

CLEANTH BROOKS

LIKE LEWIS CARROLL'S SNARK, the New Criticism is not easy to describe or locate. Even when we feel that it is in our grasp, it usually turns out to be just another boojum. Carroll never told us what either a snark or a boojum was; no more circumstantial was the man who, more or less by accident, gave the New Criticism its name.

In 1941 John Crowe Ransom, that marvelous poet and distinguished man of letters, published a book entitled *The New Criticism*. In it he discussed the critical aims and methods of Yvor Winters as the "logical" critic, T. S. Eliot as the "historical" critic, and Ivor A. Richards as the "psychological" critic. He mentions more briefly R. P. Blackmur, William Empson, and a few others. Though Ransom treated all with respect, he put on record his reservations and disagreements. He neither defined an entity called the New Criticism nor did he attempt to promote it. In fact, his last chapter is entitled "Wanted: An Ontological Critic."

Clearly, the ontological critic has not yet appeared, unless he was Ransom himself. When did the "New Critic" appear? None of those discussed in Ransom's book has ever called himself such, and my impression is that none of them is usually thought of today as a New Critic, except, just possibly, Empson. I, who am only incidentally mentioned, may be the exception.

What in fact occurred is that people who had misread *The New Criticism* or had never read it at all (had just seen the movie) assumed that Ransom was the primal New Critic and that his former students and friends were the others; and of those few, I am usually chosen as the representative New Critic. It is not an enviable position, and I sometimes feel like the man who has drawn the short straw or the child who, in the counting-out ritual, has been denominated "it." As quasi-representative, one has not only to answer for his own sins, but also to assume responsibility for the collective sins of a vague, undefined group.

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How did all this come about? Specifically, why did the epithet catch on so quickly? And how could it have done so unless the epithet had, after all, a measure of positive content?

The last two questions interlock, and to answer the latter will provide an answer for the former. The one common element that I can discern among those loosely grouped together as New Critics was the special concern they exhibited for the rhetorical structure of the literary text. This emphasis was widely interpreted by traditional scholars and critics as a playing down, if not outright dismissal, of any regard for the author's biography and his place in the culture that nurtured him.

It also implied, many felt, a disregard for the reader and the emotional impact of a given work on the reader's sensibility. Yet was not the reader's experience the real justification of literature? The charismatic professor who hoped to excite the interest of his class by conveying his own excitement felt that both he and his favorite author had been betrayed.

All three critical emphases, let us grant, have their values and uses. Circumstances will determine which is the more pertinent to the case in hand. As far as the traditional emphasis on the writer and his background was concerned, every one of those of us who were tagged as New Critics had experienced such traditional training. Furthermore, all of us were avid readers and rejoiced in the intellectual-emotional experience of reading. Those of us who taught hoped to convey that delight to others.

At any rate, rightly or wrongly, readers, and especially teachers, felt themselves threatened by this new phenomenon. The threat needed a name, and the "New Criticism" was there pat to the purpose. It came to stand for those who disparaged a study of the author and his times. I suspect that this bad reputation of the New Criticism was strengthened by the appearance of a little textbook that Robert Penn Warren and I published in 1938. We had planned to call it *Reading Poetry,* but the publishers insisted on a title that made a stronger claim, *Understanding Poetry.*

Here I must go a little further into personal history. In the early 1930s I and, shortly afterward, Warren became members of the faculty of a rapidly expanding state university in the Deep South. Though we arrived with lively interests in literary criticism, especially that of Eliot, Richards, Ransom, and Santayana—the least of our concerns was to cram the heads of our undergraduates with literary theory. The fact was that we were faced with a practical problem. One of the courses we had to teach was a course designed to introduce students to literature. Our students were bright enough young men and women, but very few of them had the slightest conception of how to read a short story, let alone a poem.

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Out of this urgent problem grew our first textbooks, for the current textbooks simply did not address themselves to the real issues. They printed the text, gave some brief account of the poet's life, supplied notes for allusions or difficult words, and usually topped it all off with a dollop of impressionistic criticism. The following quotations from two popular textbooks of the 1930s will illustrate what we found useless and sought to replace.

> The song of the nightingale [in Keats's "Ode"] brings sadness and exhilaration to the poet and makes him long to be lifted up and away from the limitations of life. The seventh stanza is particularly beautiful.

> These lyrics ["Ode to the West Wind" and "To a Skylark"] are characterized by a freshness and spontaneity, beautiful figures of speech in abundance, melody, and an unusually skillful adaptation of the form and movement of the verse to the word and the idea. Their melodiousness is sometimes compared with that of Schubert's music.

In lieu of an introduction to *Understanding Poetry*, we offered a "Letter to the Teacher," in which we stated our purpose as follows:

> This book has been conceived on the assumption that if poetry is worth teaching at all it is worth teaching as poetry. The temptation to make a substitute for the poem as the object of study is usually overpowering. The substitutes are various, but the most common ones are:
>
> 1. Paraphrase of logical and narrative content.
> 2. Study of biographical and historical materials.
> 3. Inspirational and didactic interpretation.
>
> Of course, paraphrase may be necessary as a preliminary step in the reading of a poem, and a study of the biographical and historical background may do much to clarify interpretation; but these things should be considered as means and not as ends.

In the first edition of *Understanding Poetry* we deliberately left out most (though not all) biographical and historical material, for we were hard pressed for space and we believed that, since the graduate schools of the day taught little else, the average college instructor could and would supply any necessary biographical-historical material. When the outcry came, as it soon did, that we disparaged such helps, in later editions we supplied them in abundance. But it was too late. The dog had been given a bad name that he was never able to shake off.

By the 1940s the belief in the anti-historical and anti-biographical bias of the New Criticism had fully developed. In any case, it must have been confirmed by my publication in 1947 of a book entitled *The Well Wrought Urn*. In it I discussed ten poems of different cultural periods to discover what, if anything, they had in common. The book apparently confirmed the notions generated by *Understanding Poetry* that the New

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Criticism was fixated on "close reading" through "analyses" of poems, and it took no account of the biographical and historical matrix out of which every poem comes.

So "close reading" was taken to be the hallmark of the New Criticism. But closeness is a relative matter: how close is close enough for an adequate appreciation of the work? In determining this matter, one has to take into account the difficulty of the text in question. Obviously, "Twinkle, twinkle, little star" requires less of the reader than Donne's "Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward."

Another factor that one has to take into account is the ability of a particular reader to handle a particular text. Yet, analysis is not merely a teaching device. Unless two people, disagreeing about the meaning and value of a particular poem, expect to end their debate in a shouting match, how can they hope to resolve the issue except through patiently showing what each makes of the disputed passages?

On an earlier page I stated that a criticism focused on the writer's life and background, a criticism focused on the work that he wrote, and a criticism focused on the reader's response to that work are all legitimate modes of inquiry and are compatible with each other. But I want to add now that they have different degrees of authority when we come to interpret the text.

I must, however, caution the present reader that the position I am to set forth is not necessarily that of others who have been labeled New Critics. The position to be outlined is my own, but it is not original. In arriving at it, I have been much aided by the writings of René Wellek and the late W. K. Wimsatt. Neither of these men, by the way, ever declared himself a New Critic. But then, as I have remarked earlier, who ever did?

In 1942 Wellek published an essay entitled "The Mode of Existence of a Literary Work of Art." In the course of the essay, he wrote:

> The view that the genuine poem is to be found in the intentions of an author is widespread even though it is not always explicitly stated. It justifies much historical research and is at the bottom of many arguments in favor of specific interpretations. However, for most works of art we have no evidence to reconstruct the intentions of the author except the finished work itself. Even if we are in possession of contemporary evidence in the form of an explicit profession of intentions, such a profession need not be binding on a modern observer.

In 1944 Monroe Beardsley and Wimsatt published an essay entitled "The Intentional Fallacy," followed in 1945 by "The Affective Fallacy." The former, perhaps because of what many considered to be its polemical title, provoked a great deal of hostility. It was regarded as an attempt

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to take the work away from the author, its rightful owner. I remember that one provoked reader called it little less than an act of kidnapping.

Beardsley and Wimsatt, making their own approach and adding elaborate illustrations, came to much the same general position as Wellek's. In 1968 Wimsatt returned to the problem with an essay entitled "Genesis: An Argument Resumed." This essay presents his final clarified views on the subject. I recommend it to any reader who is seriously interested in the problem of the author's intentions. Let me try to put the case against "intentionalism" succinctly and in my own terms.

The real issue is the evidential value of such intentions as the author has stated them in letters, diaries, and conversations about his work. The issue was never, as is commonly supposed, a denial that the author has any intentions; or the belief that he is "inspired" and, like Plato's Ion, writes in an irrational frenzy; or that what a work means is best left to the critic to say.

The writer's conscious intentions and designs for his work do matter, but writers sometimes feel that the work has a direction of its own—an inner drive toward its own proper fulfillment that may resist the author's early plans for the work. The intentions that have evidential value for interpreting the work are those that are actually achieved in the work itself. As Wimsatt puts it in his "Genesis": "The intention [as declared by the author] is always subject to the corroboration of the poem itself."

I grant that readers (including even distinguished critics) may fail to recognize fully realized intentions, or may misinterpret them, but so may the author. In a letter commenting on my account of *The Waste Land*, T. S. Eliot reminded me that he was now, as he looked back on the composition of his poem, simply another reader of it.

The author may also sometimes fail to recognize the full import of what he has said in his work. Katherine Anne Porter, in a letter to Warren, wrote that she liked his account (in *Understanding Fiction*) of her "Old Mortality." But she went on to tell him that he had pointed out symbolism in her story that she was not at all conscious of having put into it. Nevertheless, she was now quite convinced that it was really there. Thus, some of our most distinguished poets and writers of fiction have not blenched at the implications of the position here set forth. D. H. Lawrence, in 1923, went so far as to admonish his readers thus: "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale. The proper function of a critic is to save the tale from the artist who created it." No New Critic ever went *that* far.

In "Genesis" Wimsatt made an interesting and useful distinction between what a literary work can tell us about its author and what the author can tell us about his work. It is legitimate to move from the work back to the author, but not from the author to the work. Wimsatt goes on to choose an extreme case by which to illustrate this point, one in which

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the personality of the author closely resembles the personality of the protagonist of the poem.

Now, we know from sound biographical evidence that Thomas Gray was a man of a rather grave, reserved, and even melancholy cast of mind. Such seems also the mind and personality of the pensive man who speaks an "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." Indeed, writes Wimsatt, his poem "does seem to come out of the historic person Thomas Gray much more directly than many other poems come out of their authors. Nevertheless, the *Elegy* is not *about* the historic person Gray. The self-contemplative speaker [of the "Elegy"] remains anonymous. The poem itself, if it were anonymous, would be intact."

I would add that since it would be intact—all of it still there—even though completely detached from its author, it is fair also to call the poem autonomous. The navel string connecting it to its creator has been severed, and it now lives a life of its own. It is more than a mere extension of its author's mind and personality.

I believe that I implied such a claim of autonomy not only for Gray's "Elegy" but for the other poems discussed in *The Well Wrought Urn*. But, of course, I am not using *autonomy* in any absolute sense. No one would deny that every literary work is the product of language, of history, and of a particular culture. Yet great literary works do seem to transcend the particular culture out of which they came and continue to speak to mankind at large.

It would take me too far afield to discuss such interesting items as Eliot's celebrated (and I think badly misunderstood) assertion that poetry is not the expression of a poet's personality but a "continual extinction of personality," or Richards's conception of the poetry of "inclusion," or Tate's claim that poetry provides the "complete" knowledge that science does not provide. Nor can I deal at length with "The Affective Fallacy," except to remark that the real issue in that essay is also that of evidential value—the value of the reader's expression of the ideas and emotions aroused in him by the work in question. Such excitement is natural and proper; but it tells us more about the reader than what he is reading. Even if we value the opinion of someone we regard as a fine critic, we may prefer to know *why* he likes the work. Although all these concepts have much influenced my own criticism, I am far from sure that they ever became common doctrine.

The related concepts of paradox and irony, which occur often in my earlier criticism, did not become common doctrine either. These terms, too, have usually been misunderstood. What I was attempting to get at were rhetorical strategies that seem to me common to all poetry; even the simplest metaphor may be said to involve a paradox. For to assert that A is A ("A rose is a rose," etc.) is no metaphor, but to assert that

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A is B ("My love is a rose") is to find sameness in difference.

Irony has its twin in what most people see as its opposite: romantic wonder. Both irony and wonder arise out of a reversal of our expectations. The poet is constantly discovering for us a pattern in what we had taken to be mere confusion, or something exciting in what we had thought banal, or the dark underside of what we had supposed to be innocent and smiling.

Yet I am honestly trying to keep this little history of the New Criticism from degenerating into an *apologia pro vita mea*. I shall return to what I believe is the only common element among the critics I have been discussing: a special emphasis on the literary work as distinguished from an emphasis on the writer or the reader. I believe that a concrete example will be the most useful way to reveal the relations of these three modes to one another.

For the present reader's convenience, I have asked that my discussion of the poem be printed in ordinary roman type; that criticism mainly concerned with references to the author, along with the historical references in the poem and all other such discussion, be printed in italics; and that what has to do primarily with reader response, including what I am conscious of as my own more subjective responses, be printed in capitals and small caps. I have included in this last category little ramblings from the text as I follow some special interest. Critics are inclined to do this all the time. With some of our very newest critics it becomes almost a matter of principle.

If any reader of this article would prefer to shift the categories a bit here and there, I shall not seriously object. Some contemporary critics will certainly argue that every word of this account should be printed in small caps, since it is wholly subjective, as every piece of criticism, they insist, must be; that, consequently, no "true" reading of any poem is possible, since language is by its very nature empty of all reference to reality. But this is a matter that lies quite outside the bounds of this essay.

Channel Firing

THOMAS HARDY

That night your great guns, unawares,
Shook all our coffins as we lay,
And broke the chancel window-squares,
We thought it was the Judgment-day

And sat upright. While drearisome
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:

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The mouse let fall the altar-crumb,
The worms drew back into the mounds,

The glebe cow drooled. Till God called, "No;
It's gunnery practice out at sea
Just as before you went below;
The world is as it used to be:

"All nations striving strong to make
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters
They do no more for Christés sake
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

"That this is not the judgment-hour
For some of them's a blessed thing,
For if it were they'd have to scour
Hell's floor for so much threatening. . . .

"Ha, ha. It will be warmer when
I blow the trumpet (if indeed
I ever do; for you are men,
And rest eternal sorely need)."

So down we lay again. "I wonder,
Will the world ever saner be,"
Said one, "than when He sent us under
In our indifferent century!"

And many a skeleton shook his head.
"Instead of preaching forty year,"
My neighbour Parson Thirdly said,
"I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer."

Again the guns disturbed the hour,
Roaring their readiness to avenge,
As far inland as Stourton Tower,
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.*

The British navy is at gunnery practice in the English Channel, and the sound carries inland past some little church near the coast. *Mrs. Florence Hardy, the poet's second wife, has told us that Hardy had in mind a particular place, Stinsford Church, which is located not far from Portsmouth, an English naval base.* The noise awakens the dead, some buried centuries before. They think that the Judgment Day has come. It is important to note that the whole poem is spoken by one of these dead men. A popular expression, still current, runs: "The noise was so loud that you would have thought it would wake the dead." So a well-worn expression is, along with the dead men themselves, waked into a grotesque but arresting life.

Another threadbare expression comes to life in the description of

**The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy* edited by James Gibson (New York: Macmillan, 1978).

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other responses to the noise. We say "as poor as a church mouse," for most churches would yield precious little provender for a creature even so tiny. Hardy's little church evidently does have a resident mouse, one who has managed to find a crumb, but is so frightened that he lets it fall. THE VICAR OF THIS CHURCH IS EVIDENTLY A VERY LOW CHURCHMAN AND CARELESS TO BOOT, IF BITS OF THE CONSECRATED HOST LIE ON THE FLOOR.

Why all this circumstantial detail about the reactions of the hounds, worms, the mouse, and the glebe cow? The demands of realism, for one thing. If we are to suppose for even a moment that the noise was such that the dead would be aroused, surely the living creatures would be roused.

Hardy's anthropomorphic God does not speak in the language of the King James Version. His speech is colloquial and earthy as he voices his irritation at the doings of these incorrigible beings he has created. They are all as "Mad as hatters." Again, a well-worn simile, THOUGH MOST OF THOSE WHO USE IT ARE PROBABLY UNAWARE OF HOW IT ORIGINATED. IN AN EARLIER DAY, THOSE WHO FASHIONED FELT HATS WERE EXPOSED TO MERCURY, WHICH GAVE THEM THE JERKS AND MADE THEM APPEAR TO BE CRAZY. IN *ALICE IN WONDERLAND*, THE CELEBRATED TEA PARTY INCLUDES A HATTER AND A MARCH HARE. HARES WERE REPORTED TO GO CRAZY IN MARCH, BUT TO TELL YOU WHY WOULD BE TO RAMBLE TOO FAR FROM MY MAIN SUBJECT.

Jehovah has plenty of provocation for his anger. Man's propensity to threaten and roar his "readiness to avenge" is a direct usurpation of God's prerogative. In Holy Writ we read: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans, 12:19).

In the sixth stanza God finally breaks out in a bitter laugh, "Ha, ha." *In the earliest version of the poem (published in* The Fortnightly Review *for May 1914), God says, "No, no." Having him give a sarcastic laugh instead is a much bolder stroke. "Ha, ha," by the way, does occur in the Bible, but in only one place, and there it does not come from the mouth of Jehovah. It is tempting to speculate on how "Ha, ha" got into Hardy's poem. In Job 39:25 the war-horse "saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting." Did the thunder of the naval guns practicing for battle recall this passage to Hardy? And did he then decide to take the joyous laughter out of the mouth of the war-horse and assign it—though of course with a very different tonality—to Jehovah?* However the poet came by it, "Ha, ha" is a great improvement over "No, no." It admirably fits the emerging tone of sarcasm.

The idea for the concluding lines of this stanza, I suggest, was borrowed from Jonathan Swift's "The Day of Judgement." The first lines of the poem are spoken by Jove (here, of course, an eighteenth

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century euphemism for the God of the Christians; after all, Swift was an Anglican parson).

> *"The World's mad Business now is o'er*
> *And I resent these Pranks no more.*
> *I to such Blockheads, set my wit!*
> *I damn such Fools?—Go, go, you're bit."*

The last clause may be translated into colloquial twentieth century American as "Come, come, you've been had." But whether or not Hardy is echoing Swift is not of much importance. The matter of great importance in Hardy's poem is the deity's shift from hot anger to pitying contempt.

The poet has the dead men take their dismissal calmly. They lie down again, but like little children put to bed, they continue to talk awhile before they resume their everlasting sleep. One of them wonders whether the world will ever improve: apparently the dead man had entertained some vague hope that it might. *In the last line of the seventh stanza, "indifferent" may need a gloss. In this context it would seem to mean "neither good nor bad; of neutral quality"* (Oxford English Dictionary, 7). *In short, the skeleton who speaks here believes that his century was neither better nor worse than any other.*

IN THE EIGHTH STANZA WE ARE TOLD THAT "MANY A SKELETON SHOOK HIS HEAD," WHICH WOULD SEEM TO BE A RATHER DARING ENTERPRISE FOR A SKELETON. BUT IF WE SMILE AT THE NOTION, IT IS NOT, I SHOULD THINK, BECAUSE OF ANY SLIP ON HARDY'S PART. HE IS IN COMPLETE CONTROL: THE SKELETONS, SOMEWHAT AMUSINGLY, ARE SHAKING THEIR HEADS—CAREFULLY, ONE WOULD GUESS—LIKE ELDER STATESMEN LAMENTING PAST POLICIES NOW REVEALED AS MISTAKEN.

In this eighth stanza, the speaker is finally, after a fashion, identified: he is the neighbor of Parson Thirdly, lying in an adjoining grave. Not much of an identification, to be sure, but then, the poet does not want to particularize him. His chosen speaker is anonymous. He is any man, even Everyman.

Parson Thirdly's name is another matter. Professor J. O. Bailey has pointed out that a Parson Thirdly does occur in Hardy's novel Far from the Madding Crowd; *but Bailey apparently has been unable to find any person with such a name in the parish records or other records of Dorsetshire, and in view of the thoroughness that he manifests throughout his book, if Professor Bailey could not find the name, nobody else is likely to do so.* BUT I WOULD THINK THAT BAILEY HAS LOOKED IN THE WRONG PLACE. SURELY, HARDY GAVE HIS PARSON SO CURIOUS A NAME BECAUSE THIRDLY WAS THE OLD-FASHIONED PARSON WHO BEGAN THE EXPOSITION OF HIS TEXT WITH "FIRSTLY," FOLLOWED THAT UP IN DUE TIME

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WITH "SECONDLY," WENT ON TO "THIRDLY," AND SO ON—AD INFINITUM, SOME OF HIS PARISHIONERS MAY WELL HAVE THOUGHT.

Thirdly laments what he now considers a misspent life. But his list of sinful delights is a modest one. He does not mourn the fact that he did not lead a dashingly wicked life—no glamorous highwayman, no Byronic lover. His needs would have been fully served by more tobacco and beer, fewer prayers and sermons.

The poem ends as it began with another peal of thunder from the naval guns. But this time we are told that their reverberations carry far past the churchyard, miles inward. *Bailey has calculated that Stourton Tower is twenty miles north of Portsmouth Harbor; South Cadbury, which he thinks is the most likely site for Camelot, is twenty-eight miles north of Portsmouth; and Stonehenge, forty-five miles northeast.*

This is all very interesting and possibly helpful. But for a full appreciation of the poem, it is more important for the reader to note that as the sound of the guns penetrates farther in space, the names of the places to which it penetrates take us back in time, deeper and deeper into British history. Stourton Tower is a memorial to King Alfred's victory over the Danes in 878; Camelot was the capital of the British Prince Arthur in the fifth century; and with Stonehenge, the great monoliths on Salisbury Plain, we have passed beyond the bounds of recorded history.

Professor Bailey says that Stourton Tower, Camelot, and Stonehenge "represent civilizations that rose through battle and perished as dynasties." But this comment simply will not do. In the first place, it is at odds with history: for instance, what has Stonehenge to do with the rise of a civilization through battle? And how does Alfred fit into this scheme? He was a king who inherited a civilization and defended it successfully against invaders who meant to destroy it. Most of all, Bailey's remark seems at odds with the tone of the concluding stanza.

The tone of this last stanza is not frenetic or bitterly satiric or pityingly contemptuous. The present incident is being seen against the backdrop of a remote time. The tone is not indignant or scornful, but brooding and tragic. Man apparently from the dawn of history has been a fighting animal, but some of his wars have been fought for better causes than mere loot, and some have involved noble spirits like the historic Alfred and the possibly fabulous Arthur.

The adjective "starlit" makes its own contribution to the sense of grandeur. In choosing the adjective, Hardy may have had in mind the theory that *Stonehenge had been designed as a prehistoric celestial observatory.* In any case, the stars are associated with the remote and the eternal—entities utterly detached from the quotidian affairs of humankind.

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Even the metrical variations of this last stanza are used to strengthen the effect of solemnity. Consider the last line. The poet has so cleverly managed matters that the reader has to stress every one of the last five syllables. (Read it aloud and see, or rather hear, for yourself.) Thus Hardy has ensured that in any natural reading the line has a slow and stately movement.

Since the entire poem is imagined to have been spoken by the dead man who is Parson Thirdly's "neighbour," we learn, especially from this last stanza, something about what manner of man he was. Clearly, he was a person of imagination and some learning. He impresses me as wise, rather philosophical, and a profound observer of human nature. HE MAY EVEN RESEMBLE AT POINTS HIS LITERARY PROGENITOR, THOMAS HARDY HIMSELF.

One must be grateful to Professor Bailey for having provided so many facts about Hardy and about Hardy's countryside. They are bound to be interesting to anyone who admires Hardy's poetry and fiction. Some of them may be necessary for a full understanding of Hardy's literary work, but biographical and historical facts as such are not to be confused with literary criticism. Even a worthless poem or a fourth-rate novel may generate its own spectrum of biographical and historical facts, facts that may go far to explain how the work came about. But our mastery of these facts will not necessarily change our views of its value as *literature.*

Hardy dated the composition of "Channel Firing" April 1914—it was published in May—and four months later the firing of the guns in World War I had begun. Did Hardy, then, prophesy the coming on of that great war? *He has told us that he did not foresee it.*

What was his attitude toward that war? *Evidently much like that of other Englishmen at the time: he was saddened, shocked, especially unhappy that the enemy was the German people, whom he regarded as a race akin to his own. But he wrote a number of war poems. They are not very good as poems go, but they are intensely patriotic and justify the British participation.*

Let me make it plain that I do not argue from Hardy's subsequent war poems that he repudiated the sentiments expressed in "Channel Firing." Poets write out of different periods of their lives and out of different states of mind. Sometimes, like other men, they radically change their views. My point, however, is different. I argue that the evidence for believing that "Channel Firing" is not a simple anti-war poem is to be found in the poem itself. In order to make the point, one does not have to cite Hardy's subsequent poems defending Britain's entrance into the war. The attitude expressed in "Channel Firing" is complex, not focused on a single issue, not a special pleading for a particular cause.

BECAUSE "CHANNEL FIRING" IS MORE THAN PROPAGANDA FOR A PAR-

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TICULAR IDEA, I DOUBT THAT IT HAS EVER BEEN READ BY A PACIFIST AT A PEACE RALLY. GOD'S BITTER OUTBURST, ENDING IN A CONTEMPTUOUS DISMISSAL OF MANKIND, SCARCELY COMPORTS WITH A CALL TO PROTEST AGAINST OR TO RESIST THE WARLORDS. NOR DOES THE CONCLUDING STANZA, THE NOTE OF WHICH IS TRAGIC—AS IF ONE WERE DEALING WITH PERMANENT AND IRREMEDIABLE THINGS.

Yet what should the reader make of this fascinating poem? Even those of us who believe we have the answer will be chary of forcing it on the reader. For one thing, forcing will do no good. The reader will ultimately make his own judgment.

Each reader will have to make up his own mind, but he might properly be asked at least to read the work with due attention; to consider the meanings of the words themselves; to treat the figurative language as also meaningful, not merely as idle embellishment; to note the tone established or modulated and shifted; and to consider that even the rhythms may support the total effect. Such, in sum, seems to me to be the burden of what the badly named New Critics have said. In that case, they would appear to be in fact not new at all, but among the most old-fashioned and practical critics that we have.

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The Art of the Footnote

G. W. BOWERSOCK

IT MAY SEEM ODD to present an appreciation of footnotes in a journal that normally excludes them. The policy is, of course, perfectly understandable because the art of sophisticated annotation is so rarely practiced these days. In many literary circles footnotes are anathema. Not without reason: the scholarly urge to accumulate bibliography and multiply references is both ubiquitous and notorious; and although the fruits of erudition need not be deposited in a footnote, they often are. We have all seen (but are less likely to have read) books with more notes than text, and generally in such cases the kindest thing to be said is that the author has rendered a service to his readers by telling them all that he knows as directly as possible. The ordinary footnote has small claim to notice and certainly deserves no place in the annals of literature. That is doubtless why it is banished from these pages. But like everything else, a footnote can be done badly or well. In the hands of a master, such as Edward Gibbon, it can become a work of art and an instrument of power.

Routine footnotes usually provide welcome information, but more often than not the principal pleasure they give is to distract the reader from the text he is reading. If the text should actually prove to be absorbing, ordinary footnotes afford no pleasure whatever. Encountering one, as Noel Coward remarked, is like going downstairs to answer the doorbell while making love. It is the truly memorable note we are seeking to define and illustrate here, and it must be admitted at the outset that the citation of supporting material to justify a statement in a text is the least interesting aspect of a memorable note. There are, after all, many other ways of telling the reader why he should believe what he reads. Supporting evidence can be introduced as an integral part of the text itself; or if this procedure be deemed too damaging to an elegant style, it can be brought together in a large bibliographical heap at the end and printed in the smallest available type (a sure sign of scholarship). For writers who take no thought for the niceties of style, abbreviated citations in parentheses can be implanted into the text at desirable

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points, thereby compelling the reader who wants to unravel Ungeziefer 1973:375 to consult a bibliographical listing in some other place. This grotesque form of annotation is much favored by those social scientists who imagine that it confers scientific precision on their work, whereas at best it simply keeps the reader from noticing the inadequacies of their prose.

A superlative footnote presupposes a superlative text. Although the note should justify or illuminate the text in some way, it will evidently contain such alien matter as would disfigure that text if it were embedded there. The text is a continuous thing—everything in it has a context; but the footnote is more or less free. It is connected, obviously, to what stands above it, and yet its contents need not fit seamlessly into a fabric of sentences. It is like a variation on a theme. The composer offers a new perspective on what he or someone else has already expressed. The footnote looks neither backward nor forward. Lively entries avoid *supra* and *infra, ibid.* and *id.*, all of which have given footnotes a bad name. Each is self-contained, and the accomplished footnoter resembles most of all the author of *pensées* or aphorisms. But there is always the important difference that each note must have some bearing on the text that inspired it. It is loose and bound at the same time. The independence of the note is guaranteed by its separation from the text, but its dependence is—or ought to be—visible from its placement at the foot of the page of text to which it refers. A footnote is, after all, not just any note.

In recent years both commercial and academic publishers have had a baleful influence on footnoters. By compelling authors, for budgetary reasons, to use endnotes instead of footnotes, they have not only isolated notes from their correlative texts but also from their potential readers, who generally find it too much trouble to search laboriously through the back pages of a volume for something that might turn out to be *op. cit.* An author who knows that a note will not appear on the same page as his text lacks any incentive to create something worth reading. Somehow there is no audience out there for footnotes without a text, which is really what endnotes are. Reading notes crowded together on page after page is about as much fun as reading a collection of all the passages cut out of a bowdlerized book. But relief is at hand, and authors should rejoice: the miracle of typesetting by computer has now given new life to the moribund footnote. No honest publisher with access to a computer typesetter can claim anymore that endnotes are cheaper. A deus ex machina has snatched the footnote from oblivion.

Gibbon knew that a footnote had to be, in the most literal sense, a subtext. Unfortunately, in the first volume of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* which appeared in 1776, all the notes

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were published at the back. There they were scrupulously examined by clergymen who looked hard for errors in order to destroy the credibility of Gibbon's chapters on early Christianity. But the average reader might well have missed those trenchant observations that Gibbon reserved for his notes in a kind of counterpoint with the text. An admirer of the well-turned sentence—"Their silent discord was understood rather than seen"—would have had to consult the notes to discover that Gibbon had translated here an elegant Latin formulation that he considered "probably stolen from some better writer." Thus by a single stroke Gibbon acknowledged his indebtedness to an ancient source and his poor opinion of that source. For so agreeably impertinent a note to be separated by hundreds of pages from its text was criminal. Beginning with the second and third volumes of the *Decline and Fall*, which appeared in 1781, Gibbon's carefully crafted notes take their proper place at the foot of the page.

The immense range of uses to which Gibbon put his footnotes serves to define the entire genre. The allusion to sources, which is the primary excuse for most footnotes in the *Decline and Fall* as elsewhere, is by no means a simple matter. If a reference is given without a quotation, it is open to the author to misrepresent the source. If a quotation is actually given, it may be abbreviated or excerpted out of context. A reference can be as much an act of interpretation as an actual discussion of a passage. It was therefore only to be expected that Gibbon's critics would attack him on the grounds of the documentation in his history. The volume entitled *An Examination of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Chapters of the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by a certain Mr. Davis of Balliol College makes good reading, although not so good as the reply in Gibbon's *Vindication*. Davis endeavored to expose misrepresentations, inaccuracies, and plagiarisms, and he blamed Gibbon for cunningly concealing these by the form of his notes: "The remarkable mode of quotation which Mr. Gibbon adopts must immediately strike everyone who turns to his notes. He sometimes only mentions the author, perhaps the book; and often leaves the reader the toil of finding out, or rather guessing at the passage." Davis surmised rightly that Gibbon's notes, left unchallenged (even if unread), had the power to intimidate and persuade the uninitiated. The *Decline and Fall* was not placed on the Vatican's *Index* for nothing. Gibbon's text may have seemed offensive, but the notes were more dangerous because they gave authority to the text.

Zealous scholars like Mr. Davis crave extensive quotations from authors, especially in ancient languages, but Gibbon was well aware that a polyglot anthology would be boring. He implored his readers to believe in his honesty when he reported a source concisely, and it was

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only because Davis challenged the integrity of his reports that he felt obliged to defend himself. But he was certainly not willing to alter his practice so as to transform the notes of his subsequent volumes into commonplace books. He saw more imaginative ways of writing footnotes and, as an artist, refused to clutter them. "I cannot profess myself very desirous of Mr. Davis' acquaintance," wrote Gibbon, "but if he will take the trouble of calling at my house any afternoon when I am *not* at home, my servant shall show him my library, which he will find tolerably well furnished with the useful authors, ancient as well as modern, ecclesiastical as well as profane, who have directly supplied me with the materials of my History." This should be the classic response to all those intellectually impoverished reviewers who can think of nothing better to do when assessing a book than to add a few missing items of bibliography. Footnotes do not exist as a receptacle for learned literature. The very presence or absence of an item is, in itself, an expression of the author's judgment.

But a footnote can do more than simply advise the reader of the relevant sources for what appears in the text. The author sometimes has to explain or elaborate unfamiliar matter, and in accomplishing this Gibbon exhibited a resourcefulness and originality that even today must be the despair of every aspiring footnoter. To identify a certain "Apollonius the philosopher" for whom the emperor Aurelian felt a "superstitious reverence," Gibbon composed a footnote that has served to vex generations of Christian apologists: "Apollonius of Tyana was born about the same time as Jesus Christ. His life (that of the former) is related in so fabulous a manner by his disciples that we are at a loss to discover whether he was a sage, an imposter, or a fanatic."

On the celebrated Gaelic bard, Ossian, who later turned out to be a fiction created by James Macpherson, Gibbon expressed undisguised skepticism. Dr. Johnson had already become convinced, after a trip to Scotland, that Macpherson's so-called translations from the Gaelic were a fraud when Gibbon spotted a damning anachronism in the actual narrative ascribed to Ossian. In the text of the first volume of the *Decline and Fall,* Gibbon wrote provocatively, "Something of a doubtful mist still hangs over these Highland traditions; nor can it be entirely dispelled by the most ingenious researches of modern criticism." To those words was appended an explanatory note of exceptional perspicuity, in which Gibbon fastened on Ossian's use of Caricul as the Highland name for the Roman emperor Caracalla, son of Septimius Severus. "In the Caledonian war," Gibbon observed, "the son of Severus was known only by the appellation of Antoninus; and it may seem strange that the Highland bard should describe him by a nick-name, invented four years afterwards, and scarcely used by the Romans till after the death of that

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emperor, and seldom employed by most ancient historians." At a time such as the present, in which the exposure of literary forgery has reminded us of the ever-present danger of credulity among historians, we may justly admire Gibbon's sensitivity to the odor of deception.

Gibbon often used footnotes to bring his history of the Roman Empire into relation with the cultural and political life of his own time. In the notes a writer can become more relaxed and more conversational; he can deliver himself of quirky opinions and expose his prejudices. Even now, readers still tend to miss the mirror of the eighteenth century in the notes of the *Decline and Fall.* Gibbon's dislike of Samuel Johnson shines out here and there: "Dr. Johnson affirms that *few* English words are of British extraction. Mr. Whitaker, who understands the British language, has discovered more than *three thousand.*" Later, in narrating the Crusades, Gibbon made use of a footnote to advise his readers that in Dr. Johnson's comments on Shakespeare could be seen "the workings of a bigoted, though vigorous mind, greedy of every pretence to hate and persecute those who dissent from his creed." Gibbon awarded praise no less than blame. In a footnote citing the *Wealth of Nations* he observed, "This gradual change of manners and expense is admirably explained by Dr. Adam Smith, who proves, perhaps too severely, that the most salutary effects have flowed from the meanest and most selfish causes." Those three words, "perhaps too severely," in this highly favorable notice cast a flood of light on Gibbon himself, whose ironical and often cynical view of human affairs clearly had its limit.

Another of Gibbon's footnotes on his own time seems to have escaped the attention it deserves. In commenting on Petrarch, Gibbon seized the opportunity to attack the institution of poets laureate. He begins a footnote with the observation, "From Augustus to Louis the muse has too often been false and venal." After a sharp comment on the practice of retaining a poet laureate in the English court he goes on, "I speak the more freely, as the best time for abolishing this ridiculous custom is while the prince is a man of virtue, and the poet a man of genius." This is strong language from a writer who cared about language. The poet in question is Thomas Warton, best known for a flawed history of English poetry, but in his day a well-known Oxford don, author of *The Oxford Sausage* and other ephemera. In a footnote in an earlier volume, Gibbon had praised Warton for possessing "the taste of a poet and the minute diligence of an antiquarian." To ensure that no one mistook these words for irony, he went on, "I have derived much instruction from the two learned dissertations prefixed to the first volume of his History of English Poetry." It would be worth knowing why Gibbon thought so highly of Warton. Relevant, perhaps, is the fact that Warton, in later years, was not on the best of terms with Johnson. Furthermore,

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he was a short, rotund, and companionable man, already an Oxford personality when Gibbon was there as a boy. In his footnotes on the poet laureate, the great historian of Rome has shown us something he divulged nowhere else. That is what great footnotes ought to do.

Footnotes should be neither numerous nor long. In England and America a superabundance of bulky notes has invariably seemed a Teutonic weakness. So it seemed in Germany too. In a recent address to the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences, an eminent professor at the University of Heidelberg—himself a Hungarian, to be sure—observed that, unlike most German historians of Rome, the Oxonian Sir Ronald Syme, whose style and thought show the unmistakable influence of Gibbon, pleased his readers by consistently light footnoting. The speaker chose to underscore the importance of this observation by making comparison with what he gravely identified as a "widespread habit in the treatment of historical and philological problems in Germany." He acknowledged that there had been a few distinguished exceptions in the past, and he would undoubtedly agree that the situation is changing in Germany today. Christian Meier's new and highly successful book on Caesar for the general public has no footnotes at all, and most scholarly productions of the younger generation of Germans are remarkably un-Teutonic in their documentation.

The pedantic footnote, both long and boring, would appear, therefore, to be on the way out, but we must be careful not to lose its artful cousin at the same time. It would be regrettable, even embarrassing, if we were to be left with only the short and boring footnote, the kind of reference that gives a title and some numbers (often more than anyone would wish to look up). Fortunately masters of the artful form are still among us. Lest we hold premature obsequies at a moment when computer typesetting gives promise of more abundant life, it would be good to pay tribute to a modern footnoter of the first rank.

P. N. Furbank, in his biography of E. M. Forster, writes brilliant footnotes. They are worthy of his elegant text and display that smooth and delicate blend of interpretation, supplement, and surprise that makes footnotes seem both independent and indispensable. Furbank, like the other great practitioners of this art, knows how to instruct and to amuse, to unite *utile* with *dulce* in accordance with the unrivaled precept of Horace two thousand years ago. (If only Horace had heard of footnotes, he would have written matchless ones.) Furbank's notes are where they should be, at the bottom of the page; and a small number of long and discursive notes, which belong more to the genre of an appendix, are properly separated from the footnotes and placed at the end.

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Let us review Furbank's footnotes in the major categories of annotation as they emerged in our survey of Gibbon. These categories are unpromising on the surface: citation, explanation, and authorial comment. But Furbank knows how to make documentation a sheer delight. In the category of citation, for example, he has to support a notice that the poet Siegfried Sassoon suffered anguish over his love life and tried to keep it secret. Lowering our gaze to the bottom of the page, we read, "According to his friend Sam Behrman, when Sassoon was in America in 1920 giving readings from his war-poems, he was bitterly hurt by a reported remark of Edna St. Vincent Millay's: 'I wonder whether he would have cared so much if it were a thousand virgins who had been slaughtered.' (S. N. Behrman, *Tribulations and Laughter* [1972], p. 116)."

Among the most memorable of Furbank's explanatory notes are his arresting identifications of two obscure people. One, a certain Cecilia Mawe, was a friend of E. M. Forster's mother. In a footnote we are told that the lady was a friend from Tonbridge days. "She was an enormously tall woman, who published waltzes under her maiden name of Cecilia Friend. Her husband had been struck by lightning in Australia." Of Charles Sayle, a Cambridge aesthete, Furbank declares in a footnote: "Charles Sayle (1864–1924), for many years Assistant Librarian at the University Library. He was reputed to have exclaimed to his hostess at a dinner-party, 'I am so much enjoying your delicious salt.' "

But it is in the category of authorial comment (and reminiscence) that Furbank is sometimes able to provide unexpected and often important illumination of the subject of his biography. He had known Forster personally and is therefore a source himself. In discussing the Barabar Hills in India that were to become the model for the Marabar Caves in *A Passage to India*, Furbank appends a footnote: "He [Forster] said much later to the author that the caves were 'not all that remarkable' until they got into his book. He improved them." So much for those magical Indian caves with their unforgettable echo. They were caves of the imagination.

Near the end of his work, Furbank reports Forster's refusal of a knighthood on the ground that it was not good enough for him. (He subsequently deigned to become a Companion of Honor because, as he said, he preferred distinctions that came after the name.) In a correlative footnote we learn that Oxford had once informed Forster that an honorary degree was to be bestowed upon him and that he should present himself to receive it on a certain day. "He considered the tone of this presumptuous and replied that he must refuse the honor since it would not be convenient for him to be in Oxford on that day." This anecdote, nicely detached from a text that is concerned exclusively with royal honors, has an analogue in a well-authenticated but, it appears, still

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unpublished story about the late choreographer, George Balanchine, who, when instructed to present himself for an honorary degree at Harvard, was heard to inquire, "What is this Harvard? I have a rehearsal on that day." Some pedantic footnoter in the future will doubtless now feel free to compare these two anecdotes and declare, at the bottom of a page, that both stories reflect some traditional form of legend about famous persons and, accordingly, that neither should be credited as historical fact.

Over the years the footnote has regularly provided a safe refuge for untenable hypotheses. Writers are inclined to behave as if they will be held less accountable for indiscretions committed below the text than in it. This regrettable attitude tends naturally to work against the good reputation of footnoting. Lunacy in small print is lunacy nonetheless, and it is particularly reprehensible when it is not even amusing. We know there is trouble when we stumble upon the words, "There is nothing against the hypothesis that . . . ," for we sense at once that there is nothing in favor of it either.

It is strange that the footnote, regarded as the quintessential ingredient of scholarly communication, should so often prove to corrupt the would-be scholar. Sounding wise and authoritative comes much too easily. A contemporary sociologist is, one suspects, trying to disarm a potential antagonist when he starts a footnote with the words, "Certainly such crude comparisons are difficult. But the scale of difference should outweigh any quibbles." A remark like that needs a footnote in reply, a footnote by a master, a footnote that is ironic, withering, and informed. Other footnotes from the same sociological pen could be adduced to illustrate the triumph of generalization over imprecision: of eunuchs we are told, "The trauma of castration itself might have strengthened their ties." It seems far from obvious that all men unlucky enough to have been castrated would be drawn to one another by a feeling of shared deprivation. The removal of bodily parts is not known to establish a social bond.

But there is little profit to be drawn from emphasizing abuses of the footnote. Any vehicle of artistic expression can be readily turned to another purpose. It would be more interesting to contemplate what would happen if this very essay were equipped with footnotes. At the least, readers would then be able to locate the delectable excerpts from Gibbon and Furbank and to track down Horace's lines on *dulce* and *utile*. They would have an opportunity to explore other hypotheses by the imaginative sociologist. Yet it is undeniably better to take the volumes of Gibbon and Furbank off the shelf and peruse them at leisure. There are, after all, many other memorable illustrations of the points

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made here. To read through all of Horace's *Ars Poetica* would be salubrious for anyone. And the sociologist might prefer a lack of publicity (at least of this kind), although he should really be honored for using footnotes in the first place. He might have put everything into the text, and then it would have been impossible to distinguish which of his ideas he took seriously and which he did not.

Furthermore, if footnotes were added to this article, its author would feel obliged to express his gratitude to various friends who provided help. The reader might well wonder why any help was needed for so discursive a piece, and he will not regret being spared such a footnote as "I am indebted to Robert K. Webb . . . ." As a matter of fact, it is alarming to think of all the banal footnotes that I have written over the years and shall no doubt continue to write in order to guide readers and acknowledge debts. To admire the great footnotes of literature and to persist in conventional practice may be judged a pardonably human failing. It is at least better than not admiring at all. Writing an essay on footnotes without a single footnote may appear cowardly, if not presumptuous, but it is scarcely different from other critical endeavors. No one expects a reviewer of poetry to include a poem of his own, or a music critic to supply a tape of one of his recent concerts. And for such blessings we must all be thankful.

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The Ant and the Twig

Or the Dark Side of God

J. C. FURNAS

It's strange that God should fash to frame
The yearth an' lift sae hie,
An' clean forget to explain the same
To a gentleman like me.
Robert Louis Stevenson,
"The Counterblast Ironical"

BERTRAND RUSSELL'S AFFAIR with Lady Ottoline Morrell was nearing consummation when he learned that he might be afflicted with cancer. "My first reaction was to congratulate the Deity on having got me after all just when happiness seemed in sight. I suppose that in some part of me I believed in a Deity whose pleasure consists of ingenious torment."

The grimness of that threat, he suggested, enhanced the joys of his subsequent three days and nights with Lady Ottoline. But never mind the witness's self-celebrated private life. Our point is that a mind so renowned could react as though Something Up There was persecuting him for fun.

Lord Russell's name lends weight to the speculations that this text will diffidently deploy. They need backing. Responsible brains mistrust them. See how Isaac Asimov, professor of biochemistry at the Boston University School of Medicine as well as prince of science fiction, handles this line of—not exactly thought—call it lurking suspicion: "Does the Creator take pleasure in fooling us? . . . Can it be that [He] is a cruel and malicious prankster with a vicious and adolescent sense of humor?" Asimov leaves such propositions undignified by rebuttal. Yet one is tempted to say: "Not so fast!" Miguel de Unamuno wrote: "When a thing is said to be not worth refuting . . . it is either flagrantly stupid—in which case all comment is superfluous—or . . . the very crux of the problem." Maybe Russell's reflex surmise is not to be dismissed summarily. For something like that has also been strikingly stated by many

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eminent voices, among them those of Shakespeare and the Greek dramatists whom Aristotle found so hygienically purgative.

To define by example, a most persuasive method, and lead with an ace, call as first witness the Lord God Jehovah. His own writings justify the subpoena. His Book of Job tells how a certain Satan, one of the "sons of God" attending Him, is asked: "Whence comest thou?" Satan replies: "From going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it." The Lord goes out of His way to ask: "Hast thou considered my servant Job . . . a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?" (This Job has been already built up as a pastoral plutocrat with 7 sons, 3 daughters, 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 she-asses, who duly sacrifices to Him who showers down such prosperity.) Satan replies: "Doth Job serve God for naught? . . . Put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Understandably irked, the Lord deputizes Satan to test Job: "All that he hath is in thy power." Satan goes at it with a will. Job's progeny are massacred, and his flocks and herds are stolen. When these calamities fail to shake him, he is agonizingly afflicted with boils "from the sole of his foot unto his crown." His wife advises him to curse God and die.

Conventional religion sees the point of it all in Job's refusal to do any such thing. Maintaining his faith in his liege-tormentor (for, unaware of Satan's agency, he must assume it is all the Lord's doing) he is occasion for the Lord's refusing, in gorgeous eloquence supplied by the translators of the King James Bible, to let any thrall-creature of His even comment on His doings. Making this clear with an emphasis that sounds almost insecure, He calls Satan off and restores Job's prosperity, indeed "blessed the end of Job more than at the beginning," for he soon owns 14,000 sheep, 600 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, 100 she-asses, begets another family of seven sons and three daughters, and dies "old and full of days."

Good for the old gentleman! say we all. Less deferentially, however, consider the Lord's uneasiness about whether Job's devotion implies condign awe of His majesty or—as Satan cheekily suggested—hopes of continuing prosperity. For analogy, think of an heiress who is uncertain whether her suitor loves her primarily for herself. Only here the feeling is even chillier. For Satan clearly, for the Lord almost as clearly, the episode has an entertaining side. Most of us, often as children, have observed an ant on its anxious business and put a twig in its way to see whether it climbs over or goes round. Indeed Satan seems to have a certain unwholesome relish in the ant's tribulation as such. He used anything but economy of means when killing off Job's family, cared

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nothing for the straits to which lack of the missing livestock must have reduced Job's retainers, and just as little for Job's torments, physical from the boils, emotional from inability to understand what brought it all down on him. These connotations verge on a text from a different scripture:

> Like flies to wanton boys are we to the gods,
> They maim us for their sport.

Speculation that calls in both the Bible and Shakespeare deserves consideration.

The case here is stronger because the Lord had already shown a taste for such experiments. Genesis carries a marked odor of the laboratory and Bluebeardish entrapment. The Lord creates the Garden of Eden and a mated pair of organisms in His image to make the most of its good things and each other, world without end. The Old Testament is vague about His purpose but the Westminister Catechism and other august theological sources have it that He wished to staff His universe with creatures whose "highest end is to glorify God and fully to enjoy him forever." To that holy narcissism, however, one is likely to add curiosity, desultory whim, or possibly a tingle of revulsion from such flagrant well-being. For presently He pollutes his idyll with a sinister stimulus—the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil, to eat the fruit of which, He personally warns, means death. Enter the mortality to which we have been heir ever since.

This makes the Serpent a mere device to make sure that bait and subjects make contact. Does the Lord's satisfaction when the experiment works, showing the free will with which he endowed Adam and Eve to be valid, exceed what He would have felt had they resisted temptation? We know merely that He let the consequences of their Fall develop all the way down to the present. It may well have been worth His while thus to have the joys of eternal adulation varied by the spectacle of the pitiful, wild, petty, admirable, shameful things that Adam and Eve's breed still perpetrate. Nor can the above be altogether dismissed as irresponsible surmise. In his recent book, *Biblical Games*, Professor Steven J. Brams, applying John Von Neumann's famous theory of games to Scripture, concluded that the God of Genesis was "always suspicious and very touchy . . . he seems secretly to hope that [mankind] will not live up to his standards, thereby giving him opportunity to dramatize his own strength and their weakness." None of that would have been news to whoever wrote the Book of Job.

Granted, this interpretation of notoriously cryptic myths is not edifying. But it improves on the ancient Sumerians' crude accounting for

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what it is fashionable to call "the human condition." The Sumerians held that when the gods made the world, they were drunk.

Tone-setting examples discussed here will not all be so familiar. Understand that traditional materials from the Bible are not adduced as history. For all anybody knows, Job was as fictional a vehicle for ideas as Swift's Lord Peter. Yet mythical figures, whether synthetic or autochthonous, can be useful models of their sponsors' notions of what goes on between mankind and powers stronger, wiser, and (in our view) less scrupulous than we. They can set forth allegorically what preliterate cultures lack the terms to state in generalities. And though they bloom in many different times and contexts, these models often show strong affinities, as folklorists point out.

To shift from the Fertile Crescent to archaic Greece, the myth of Oedipus is a valuable one. It needs careful handling, for, as is sometimes disrespectfully pointed out, Freud warped it almost beyond repair. The essence of *his* Oedipal situation is: Normally son is jealous of father and lusts after mother; trauma occurs when the standing taboo on incest forces him to suppress his libido in that direction. In the original, however, Oedipus is tricked into killing his father and bedding his mother *without knowing his relation to either.* An oracle has warned Laius, king of Thebes, that his own son will kill him. To prevent that, the boy-child borne by Laius's queen, Jocasta, is exposed to die—a fate for unwanted babies that is common in elder cultures. The couple remains unaware that the doomed child is rescued, and the king of Corinth rears him as his own. Grown up, this Oedipus, like so many folk heroes, goes forth to seek his fortune. At a crossroads he quarrels with a bullying stranger and, unaware that this is his natural father, King Laius, kills him. Proceeding, he arrives at Thebes, unaware that it is his birthplace. He learns that its now-vacant throne and the widowed Jocasta's hand are the reward for whoever will rid Thebes of the Sphinx—a she-monster that puts a riddle to passersby and devours them when they fail to solve it. Oedipus confronts the Sphinx and gives the right answer; she kills herself; he takes over the crown and Jocasta, unaware that she is his mother. When the double scandal—patricide and incest—comes to light, Jocasta kills herself and Oedipus blinds himself in self-revulsion. An early version has him live on for years, self-imprisoned in one room. In the familiar Sophocles version, he wanders as an outcast beggar until he finds a transcendental reconciliation to his fate and becomes a creative influence on Athens.

Neither accounts for Oedipus being maneuvered into such trouble to begin with. In psychiatric jargon the culture concocting this lurid plot subliminally needed cathartic release from the incest taboo through

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surrogate crime and guilt. More likely the tale is simply minatory—an Aesopian fable told as true to highlight the perils of sleeping with taboo kinfolk. It is important that Oedipus and Jocasta lacked all previous guilty knowledge. For incest is incest, automatically calling down horrible punishment as if it were a poison that kills, whether or not one knows one ingested it.

Yet for that purpose the scenario is unnecessarily elaborate. Greek folklore, gamily fond of the incest motif, has other, more direct such incidents. Try a third accounting: supernal powers juggling men's lives in the same spirit in which the Lord and Satan tormented Job. The motives seem just as frivolous. Something chooses Laius and his family for doom and, through the oracle's warning, sets off a chain of mishaps; it eventually arranges the ostensibly chance meeting of father and son, sends Oedipus, again ostensibly by chance, to Thebes, and then, one is tempted to suspect, sits back to watch the consequences. And note the cleverly agonizing twist: Oedipus's lack of guilt robs him of even the deliberate sinner's half-comforting realization that he brought it on himself.

Closely related, of course, is the Homeric world in which the gods use Greeks and Trojans as tokens in a Monopoly game. They manipulate mortals to match their intestine rivalries and are also patronizingly interested in the smaller, interlocking games that men and women play down below—gods for fun, mortals for keeps. Again, there is close analogy to the Lord, Satan, and Job. One may partly excuse the Job story as all to be expected from hidebound pastoralists suspecting that awesome mischievous powers are in charge and similarly condescend to the relatively primitive *Iliad*. But not to Sophocles' trilogy. That subtle, eloquent, and ambiguous celebration of what They did to Laius and family came at the peak of Greek cultivation.

Thus to postulate self-conscious, meddling forces is woefully unscientific, for adequate check on whether They exist is inconceivable. A while ago, however, Russell, Shakespeare, and others got oblique support from scientists in two papers in *Icarus: International Journal of Solar System Studies*. John A. Ball's "The Zoo Hypothesis" asked why the extraterrestrial civilizations that may exist do not get in touch with us and suggests the hypothesis that "they are deliberately avoiding interaction . . . have set aside our area as a zoo . . . in which the fauna inside do not interact with and are unaware of their zookeepers." Like the schoolroom's glass-box ant colony? In "Directed Panspermia," another sighting shot at this looming target, F. H. C. Crick and L. E. Orgel serve up the possibility of space vehicles having deliberately infected our previously life-lacking planet with microorganisms. As likely motives the authors proffer either "a demonstration of technologi-

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cal superiority or . . . some form of missionary zeal." With due caution they point out that, since "the psychology of extraterrestrial societies is no better understood than terrestrial psychology," the purpose may well be inscrutable.

" . . . the earth not as a zoo but as a Petri dish," commented *Scientific American*—a welcome simile, for the Petri dish is a laboratory receptacle for developing cultures to be kept under observation. And in the laboratory using it, the chief motive is, however dignified by scientific purposes, one or another form of curiosity.

That world of Petri dishes is seldom funny, and neither are Oedipus's woes, unless as black humor. Yet the overtones in this context can stir up astringent amusement. Literary men often notice it. Melville: " . . . certain queer times and occasions . . . when a man takes his whole universe for a practical joke." Robert Louis Stevenson: " . . . those malicious coincidences which suggest for Fate the image of an underbred and grinning schoolboy." John Gay: "Life is a jest and all things show it; / I thought so once and now I know it." Graham Greene: "Nothing is ever what we intend. . . . You could almost think there was a great joker somewhere who likes to give a twist to things. Perhaps the dark side of God has a sense of humor."

The occasion of Russell's dismay was erotic, which poses the question raised long since by E. B. White and James Thurber in *Is Sex Necessary?* For in view of the simplicity, economy, and efficiency of asexual reproduction, it is hard to understand why the sexual kind ever appeared. Biology used to explain it as affording wider opportunity for chromosome mixing, hence wider variation in life forms. Only now we know that mutations set off by radiation (and doubtless other as yet obscure stimuli) can lead to many radical variations. The amazing variety of microscopic organisms that know not sex show how much that can accomplish. The hint is broader—in both senses—in the comment on human coition attributed to Madame de Staël: sensations delightful, positions grotesque. Did They Up There invent the unnecessary dichotomy of sex to add raciness to cosmic humor?

Consider the love life of the *palolo* worm of the South Pacific. Normally these creatures vegetate in living coral far below the ocean's surface. At a certain full moon, however, the procreative urge seizes them. The female sloughs off her egg-bearing segment; the male sloughs off his sperm-bearing segment; both detached segments float to the surface. There the male segment bursts; the sperm permeates the water and fertilizes the eggs of the female segments, which then sink below to supply a new generation of worms. Moonlight, warm tropic seas, utterly promiscuous houghmagandy—it sounds like quite an orgy until one

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reflects that the female is thus fulfilled without any contact with the male, for the individuals originating the surface-seeking segments stay full fathom five and get no fun at all.

Now leave the romantic depths of the South Seas for the clear light and buoyant air of the world of insects. Algeria has a sandbank-dwelling wasp with poor eyesight. The male emerges seasonally from his burrow a month before the females come out for mating. Meanwhile he is spared frustration, for on the same sandbanks grows an orchid, the flower of which looks enough like the female wasp to deceive the myopic male. Mistaking flower for lady, he copulates with it, not only relieving his urges but inadvertently fertilizing the orchid by jamming its stamens and pistil together. Describing this absurd arrangement, Professor Weston LaBarre has the good judgment to comment merely, "How could the orchids know about these undiscriminating, myopic, month-long bachelors?" and then let it roll to the outfield.

Summer fireflies lose their uncanny charm when one learns of the hazards of their love lives. Nobody yet knows how the firefly produces those intermittent gleams, but their purpose has been worked out: they are specific mating calls and responses. As if operating a Navy blinker, the female flashes a special combination of dots and dashes that means, "I want to mate." Across the lawn an airborne male picks it up and flashes back another combination meaning, "Here I come, let's do it." They meet and do. Many species of firefly share an environment, so to prevent mistakes, each has its own code. Females of species A signal only dit-*dot*-dit. The male A is programmed to respond to that signal only, ignoring females of species B because they signal only dit-dit-*dot*. Now the grisly joke: When hungry, the female of one large, powerful species—say species X—lurks down Lover's Lane and sends not her own signal but that of, say, species A. And when a male A (much smaller than she) homes in on her false signal, Madame X—imagine his dismay—eats him alive. Such goings-on are not confined to fireflies. Female spiders notoriously eat their mates after copulation. He-spiders stand small chance, but one kind of fly has a defense. To keep from being cannibalized, the male is programmed to bring along while courting, not a box of candy, but a tiny dead insect wrapped in a silken fiber that he excretes for the purpose. Opening the package and gobbling the contents distracts the lady long enough to allow him to work his lustful will on her, then take off at flank speed—just in time.

A universe where things like that occur many million times a year will not square with religion's all-in-God's-good-hand model or the agnostic but Panglossian cosmologist's all-mathematical-harmony model. Robert Louis Stevenson called it "a shaggy world, sunshiny, lewd and cruel." He might have added "frivolous," for a footloose levity

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sometimes wells up from below. One would think that, having imposed sex on biology, those in charge might at least have stabilized it. No such luck. Experimenters—and presumably whoever works the weather in the swamps—effect diametric sex changes in some mosquitoes merely by raising or lowering environmental temperature. Minor fluctuations produce mosquitoes vacillating perplexedly between maleness and femaleness. One even hears of insects of which the right side is male, the left female.

Greene's "Nothing is ever what we intend" is akin to Murphy's First Law: "If something can go wrong, it will," or more subtly: "Nature is on the side of the hidden flaw." Another cognate is the philosophy of Resistentialism that the London *Observer*'s Paul Jennings found bubbling on the Left Bank twenty years ago; its founding sages were Ventre and Friedegger. The principle is basic. It hardly matters that when one looks for a certain passage in a book one has just read, that one paragraph refuses to jump out of a page. But it matters much that a major result of applying sound public health methods to "underdeveloped" countries is catastrophic overpopulation. Nearer home, one consequence of relying on the "pill" and the IUD—both lacking the prophylactic function of the condom and encouraging impromptu coitus—is a fulminating increase in venereal disease, the last thing that birth-control crusaders would have wished. Now for the second twist: neglected gonorrhea often so damages the Fallopian tubes that conception is impossible. This irrevocably sterilizes a high proportion of heedless teenagers—an inadvertent and deplorable way of achieving what the crusaders did have in mind.

Hawaii brought in the mongoose to combat rats in its sugarcane fields. The mongoose, vigorously multiplying, wiped out most of the native birds. Ecologists cite many such disasters from rash introductions. One introduction that probably caused the most mirth Up There was the cultivated project of the bright young New Yorker who, a hundred years ago, wished to endow America with all the birds familiar to Shakespeare. He released in Central Park several pairs each of robins, larks, starlings, and so on. Most of the poor things failed to survive—but the starlings flourished. And it is now a question of which is worst: their tumultuous twitterings, their gooey mass-droppings, or their arrogant ousting of native birds from food supplies and nesting sites.

All this embodies the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s second definition of irony: "A contradictory turn of events as if in mockery of the promise and fitness of things." Politics as well as ornithology shows that They Up There may be even fonder of irony than of coarse skulduggery. However carefully a legislative measure is drafted to benefit society or correct a wrong, unpredictable side effects all too often do more harm than

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anticipated results do good. The Eighteenth Amendment is the classic case. It did somewhat cut down on the American workingman's drinking; but it also embedded organized crime in the economy, undermined respect for law, deprived government of large revenues while raising its expenses, and begot stock-car racing. For a more recent example: well-meant efforts to strike the shackles of old-maidish censorship from the arts have, God knows, succeeded. But now, after three decades, where is that promised withering away of pruriency and hypocrisy? We have a billion-dollar pornography industry; a boom in prostitution; all conceivable obscenities infesting living rooms through cassettes and cable television; and the smarmy hypocrisy of invoking the First Amendment to protect pederastic and sadomasochistic materials.

War is rich in sharp-edged irony. Burnside leans his head against a porch post, a cannonball strikes the post—and thousands more get killed at Fredericksburg. Napoleon's hemorrhoids may have affected the upshot at Waterloo. The origin of the Charge of the Light Brigade in a muffed order was heavy-handed; then Somebody Up There thought of setting Tennyson to basing an inspirational poem on the catastrophe and created irony exquisite indeed. By attacking Pearl Harbor, the Japanese rescued the Soviet Union from the Nazis. For in order to fight the United States while heavily committed on the Asian mainland, Japan had to ration resources. The Russians correctly assumed she would have to slacken pressure on the Siberian frontier, enabling them to withdraw from Siberia enough fresh divisions to check Hitler's advance on Moscow—just in time. A miscue thus involving millions of troops on a field of action twelve thousand miles square should have been much applauded Up There. But They may not bother with such crude intellectual tools as number and scale.

Sex, politics, war—and religion. Here America has been fertile. At first the story of the Mormons looks, as is often said, like a parody of Islam, crude again. But when Joseph Smith's harassed following of backwoods misfits got stiffened by straitlaced, blue-collar converts from Britain, went into chrysalis in Utah, and emerged an oligarchic, monolithic commonwealth, flaunting savings-bank virtues, They had subtler reason to be gratified. Of Christian Science, also American, Mark Twain said: "It is blasphemy longer to deny to the Supreme Being the possession of a sense of humor." The Ras Tafari cult among Jamaican blacks (a spin-off from Marcus Garvey's black chauvinism in Harlem in the 1920s) persists in venerating the former ruling dynasty of Christian Ethiopia that prided itself on being lily white in ancestry.

Note these are all excrescences of Christianity. The parent matrix has marked ironic beauty. Out of a narrowly ethnic Near Eastern religion

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came monotheism. Out of that grew predictions of the Messiah, a priestly king-redeemer, whose advent would bring universal righteousness and the end of this imperfect world. Thence came a splinter movement of ascetic prophets, culminating in John the Baptist and Jesus, encrusted with teachings about a moral cleansing to fit mankind for eternal bliss. And since the end was near, maybe even next week, the potentially righteous were to drop everything, forget the practical criteria of everyday life, take no thought for the morrow—it won't be there. The Jews' common sense, aided by a conservative hierarchy, rejected all that along with implicit identification of Jesus with the Messiah. In the ensuing crisis in this third-rate Roman dependency of Judea, Jesus was martyrized. A few of His devotees decided that, now that their own people scorned His message, they would try it on the Gentiles—the non-Jews who comprised 99 percent of the Mediterranean world.

Very gradually the Apostles gained a hearing. A self-righteous underground cult of anti-establishment flavor grew up among the Roman Empire's least promising strata. The political luck that eventually made this bedraggled sect a major institution of the Western world was so outrageously good that only deliberate supernal intervention could account for it. Christianity had every reason to believe in miracles. For nineteen-hundred-odd years the miracle workers—They Up There—have had the juicily ironic spectacle of Christianity struggling, and naturally getting nowhere, to reconcile a Gospel based on the-end-of-the-world-tomorrow with the awkward fact, ever more dismaying as centuries passed, that the world has no intention of obliging.

So, though the stone that the builders rejected became the head of the corner, it was a poor fit. Meanwhile the Jews' rejection of the Gospel created ironies in their destiny. What got them subjected and dispersed was not that rejection but their general plucky reluctance to adjust to intrusive alien cultures and governments. Whithersoever they scattered, most of them proudly preserved their eloquent, exclusionary religion. It was good psychological armor against Gentile xenophobia, but it also reinforced the Chosen People's own built-in xenophobia. For, though patriarchs, prophets, and Talmudists successively elaborated Abraham's religion, it remained that of a semi-nomadic tribe certain, like many indrawn primitive cultures, that they alone are fully human and their gods specially regard their welfare. (This is set forth not as on epitome of Jewish history but as a synoptic guess as to how it looks from Up There.) Certain Gentile cultures, true, have been afflicted with the superiority complex: the Germans most destructively; the British in Empire times; the French still in their conviction that the arts and social graces are not really happy anywhere but in Paris; the Americans casting themselves as

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missionaries of democracy and well-being. Yet, though the Nazis did borrow Wotan's trappings, none of those aberrations used religion as the chief prop of collective delusions of grandeur; whereas the status of Divinely Chosen People is a primary tenet of Judaism.

By now some notion of Their ways of doing and thinking can take shape. They are inconsistent. As Emerson taught, inconsistency goes with breadth of scope. Thanks to Their putative omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, They can blithely choose targets at random, neglecting here, ignoring there, but pouncing at whim on other situations of the same nature. The ant presented by the child with the problem of the twig is chosen from among dozens in view not for salient quality but through propinquity and chance. Then, once interest is roused, They may follow down with direct intervention—shifting the twig to set further problems—that to the participants seems the result of chance.

For our taste the cream of it may be those great novels or dramas that They create under the guise of history. The tragedy of Alexander the Great would be an early example; only it is probably distorted by folklore, for his day lacked our standards of reporting. The story of Joan of Arc is, however, well taped down. That melodramatic jumble of piety, bigotry, protopatriotism, armed valor, and superstition would sound like Victor Hugo's work were its tone not far better because its episodes were as real as the walls of the Chinon, Orléans, Reims, and Rouen where improvisation worked them out. It was genius, besides, to focus this great medieval story on a misfit woman. For significant action the mutiny on the HMS *Bounty* may be even better. It was probably the same genius that arranged for time, isolation, and dislocation to change that huddle of disgruntled seamen first into murderous feudists and then into pious dimwits. Neither Tolstoy nor Conrad would have dared try that. In both stories one can almost feel Their laboratory probes diverting the characters' behavior toward ironical overtones. They weave such yarns for Their own pleasure, not ours. But how spendid that we may sit in! And how one wishes that human writers would leave these masterpieces alone in their original vigor and integrity!

They have a second method of manipulation that may yield another sort of entertainment. Sometimes They limit interference to a single event and then let matters take their own course, as in the fable of the rabbit that dislodged a single pebble downslope and set off an avalanche. Columbus's monomania distracts Isabella of Castile from the exacting problems of the Iberian Peninsula—and the world undergoes an agricultural revolution that sets populations soaring into the billions and, incidentally, inflicts the tobacco and cocaine habits on mankind,

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famine on Ireland, pellagra on the Po Valley, and tomato catsup on the roadside diner. This adds the pleasure of wondering what happens next. Theologians who saw Omnipotence as purely deterministic, knowing in advance all that will be, robbed Him of much potential diversion. Maybe that is why He endowed Adam and Eve with free will.

Human thinking is often said by human beings—we cannot know how They look at it, if They bother—to be anthropocentric, seeing things narrowly in human-centered terms. For environmentalists and mystics, the charge is healthily corrective. Yet it does look as if, for Their own cold-blooded reasons, They sometimes make mankind a special case, the favorite toy They had in mind when They whittled out the solar system, spun our planet off, and set it fermenting. Granted that the universe is ineffably vast and inscrutably mysterious, might we not be, in at least terrestrial terms, "heirs of all the ages," teleological consequences of an evolutionary groping toward some such bundle of ironies as we do seem to be? Soon after I drafted this passage, I was startled by a paper by Professor George Gale in *Scientific American* entitled "The Anthropic Principle." Its third paragraph proffers the tail-foremost but fruitful idea that "the universe has the properties we observe today because if its earlier properties had been much different, we would not be here as observers now." Then the author describes how colleagues in the philosophy of science now surmise that "although [human observers'] situation is not necessarily central, it is inevitably privileged to some extent" and that "the [human] observer is as essential for the creating of the universe as the universe is to the creation of the observer." The details of such privilege doubtless range from petty bits and pieces to the unplumbed depths of psychology.

And of morphology and physiology. Owing largely, it may be, to fumbling mutations, mammals are lamentably engineered. The reproductive system is terribly clumsy and hazardous, and mammals share with many others the foolishness of having their brain, the control and information center, vulnerably forward in a hard, fragile capsule. When the old Greeks dreamed up those African monsters with brains well insulated among the muscles and bones of the thorax, they were better designers than Mother Nature. The human mammal, however, suffers special troubles because he chose to stand upright. That shifted the spine from ridgepole to flagpole. Consequent strains on the viscera and stresses within the skeleton produce unnecessary, often painful malfunctions and the pseudoscience of chiropractic.

Our second, more decorous special trait is the faculty of self-awareness. "Consciousness" is too broad; other animals have that; it is what the vet blocks out with anesthetics. "Self-consciousness" would do, only it connotes social clumsiness. So "self-awareness," awkward as

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it is, must indicate the trait of which Unamuno said: "Man, by the very fact of . . . possessing consciousness, is . . . a diseased animal. Consciousness is a disease." Certainly this momentous gift (from Them?) makes man the only animal of whom what the Preacher said is true: "The living know that they shall die." It not only sets us apart from our zoological kin, it affords us a special order of experience, which probably carries special entertainment for Them. It makes possible our stupid uses of our collective past, our astringent sense of what-might-have-been-if-only, and maintains that exasperating membrane between oneself and the rest of creation, the subjective-objective cleavage that blooms early in the child but never, so far as is discernible, in the puppy.

Recent outer-space probes make our sense of uniqueness look less foolish than it used to. Mars has no little green men with antennae. Life on Venus could never survive the surface conditions there. Like it or not, we are probably the only self-aware creatures in the solar system. Since the sun is only one of millions or, very well, billions, that is no great matter. But look at us *within* our solar system. We are well ahead of the great carnivores and are holding our own against insects and microorganisms. If atomic energy does flay our planet alive, it will be an ironic credit to the human faculties—scientific research and non-programmed social structures—into which self-awareness inveigled us. Could it have been the promised side effect of Eve's apple? They would certainly relish such an eventual result of the Genesis experiment.

Should the nuclear fireworks sputter out, our annihilation will not matter to Them. They have those millions of other planetary systems to play with. Another possibility, however, suggests itself: To afford mankind scope for innate megalomania, They may have set up this whole universe as an illimitable practical joke on the overweening science that we so exultantly developed. After all, it can be no more trouble to Them to whip up a universe than to rig it so that the bread falls with the butter side down. And the cosmic joke on science seems sharper every decade or so. Seeking to learn how the thing works, astrophysics must conclude that in any intelligible sense it doesn't work at all. For the only thing as absurd as the big bang is the alternative phase-in-and-out theory. Seeking to understand substance, physics must now allow that it is the essence of substance to be insubstantial. Having made predictability a test for the validity of a finding, science now confesses that the behavior of the constituents of matter can be stated only in terms of nonpredictability. This gives us—and Them—the ironic paradox of *Credo quia absurdum demonstratur.*

A hypothesis strengthens its title to validity when it sheds unanticipated light on previous perplexities. Orthodox evolutionists never could

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make it sound plausible that random variation and natural selection could produce such a complicated device as the eye, let alone the human brain; or such fantasies as that Algerian orchid got up as a female wasp. Even with post-Darwinian help from abrupt mutations, the most devoted geneticists cannot cope with those living riddles. Might not the solution be that They sometimes borrow and pervert the mechanisms of evolution for Their arbitrary whimsies? Only in some such terms can one conceive of how the Kailima butterfly's dorsal markings achieved perfect imitation of the colors and textures of dead leaves, moldy spots and all.

Science cannot yet spell out the crucial chemical event that brewed life out of the primeval ooze. The implausibility of that event ever having occurred hints at another case of momentous consequences from Their inquisitive tweakings. No God, no Genesis. Even the august "problem of evil" will show effects from this solvent. How can an omnipotent, benevolent deity countenance the existence of pimps, weasels, hydrophobia, Nazis, and coprophiles, or of a devil who sponsors such things? The error, shared by Manichean and mystic, is to assume that anything with supernal power and knowledge must be good. The difficulty dwindles when one savors Their always inhuman (in the strict sense) and clearly amoral habits, neither good nor bad in recognizable terms. Job's Lord made some of that very clear.

The impressive claims of mystics come into better perspective when one senses Their presence in the woodpile; thus, in Their view the normal limitations of Their human toys seemed dull and crude. So, for certain persons, They arranged temporary seizures of what would seem like transcendent union, superlatively beautiful and reassuring, with Perfect Being. (That is as close as anybody who never felt it can come to description; the mystic himself seldom does much better, for words are inadequate by definition.) Then the joyful smugness of it rubbed Them the wrong way. They enabled others to learn that ecstasy could be brought on deliberately by self-inflicted ordeals—prolonged meditation or fasting, self-torture with whips or weights, even sleeplessness—that is, Ultimate Beauty attained by abusing one's biochemistry. Then time- and trouble-saving became available. They provided for the less-earnest persons a number of plants or plant-derived drugs—tobacco, locoweed, Jimsonweed, peyote cactus, certain fungi; alcohol from yeast, opium from poppies, hashish from cannabis—that brought on the same mystical pleasures, or reasonable facsimiles, at little or no cost in devoted effort. In our time, LSD, amphetamines, and "angel dust" came out of the laboratory to widen the range, an exploitation of pharmacology that had a marked equalitarian effect. For previously only a predisposed few had the biochemical luck and willpower to enjoy mystical privilege. Now almost anybody in a position to gather a few cactus buttons or sacred

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mushrooms can get as beatifically high as Saint Theresa.

This is not sacrilegious. Drug-induced glories and religion are traditionally close. The alcohol-sodden bacchante was taken to be celebrating Dionysus. The pythoness vouchsafed holy oracles only after breathing in narcotic gas. Peyote is part of certain Indians' worship of the white man's Christ. But the further twist is deflating: If a disciple of Dr. Timothy Leary is under the influence of LSD—a strictly biochemical situation—and has feelings just like those of a triumphantly fasting saint, might not the saint's experience be put down to a deliberately skewed physiology? When Beatrice Webb told Bertrand Russell that prolonged fasting made her feel "more spiritual," she was annoyed when he said, "Yes, if you eat too little, you see visions; and if you drink too much, you see snakes." In that light, mystical experience breaks into two categories of adepts: the primordial kind, probably still extant, physically liable to hormonal accidents at irregular intervals and welcoming them at the time; and those dependent on artificial means, whether flagellation or drugs.

The fastidious constitutional adept may deny that what happens to him when the spiritual wind is in the right quarter is congruent with the hippie's "instant mysticism." And it is conceivable that such hormonal adventures do actually turn him into a fourth-dimensional lens for seeing the Infinite Glory; whereas the sequelae of LSD are deceptive mock-ups, sometimes betraying their falseness by inflicting indescribable horrors—the bad trip. To the non-adept, the coarse outsider, the distinction seems shaky. To Them Up There, these debatable phases of being, putatively verging on immediate contact with Their ineffable glories, might provide the third stage of irony of which They are apparently fond.

What the West thinks of as religion can have originated in primordial mystics' zeal to share their ecstasy—an impulse that, though generous, may blend with the drug user's proselytizing pressure on others to try a trip just once to see what it's like. In juggling mankind's religious bent, however, They may have also resorted to direct means. The twin notions of immortality and a God of Gods preferring good to evil and rewarding or punishing immortal souls to match are not implicit in mysticism. Adept mystics, such as Cardinal Richelieu's *éminence grise*, can be powerfully immoral. Those linked notions of immortality and righteousness may have been separately injected, possibly through dreams.

Even animals dream, we know. Our primitive forebears probably dreamed as elaborately as we do. But they may not have distinguished as clearly between dream and reality. A typical primitive man dreaming of relatives or friends who, he recalled on waking, were long dead was likely to draw the proto-religious conclusion that somehow, somewhere, they still survived the carcasses that he had seen eaten, buried, or

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burned. Enter a presumption of immortality. Further, a dream encounter with his powerful, gimlet-eyed grandfather might suggest that the old tyrant was not only still around but probably keeping tabs on things as sternly as ever. Enter the germ of an omniscient, censorious deity. Or a whole pantheon could come of dreams of swashbuckling dead warriors, uncannily skilled craftsmen, formidable sorcerers, voluptuous priestesses . . .

A Venus-goddess's concern for morals? But a God-the-Grandfather would value right and wrong and distribute rewards and punishments as his prototype had in waking life. Since wrongdoing does not invariably bring immediate penalty in this world, it would follow that He often defers important details of the reward of virtue to the next world. Hence the carousings in Valhalla, the daily renewed virginities of Mohammed's paradise, the holy bliss of the Christian heaven. And as such ideas matured, balance required that God-the-Grandfather supply a hell of punishments for sinners as exquisite as the joys of paradise.

None of this is actual anthropology, but it is a stripped-down model summarizing a wide range of cultural processes. The polytheistic Greeks and Romans were rather hazy about punishments on the other side of the grave. But monotheists, concentrating on God-the-Grandfather, were another matter. Dreams and tough grandfathers must have been rife in most cultures. Why then did only the Near East (Judaism, early Christianity, Islam) come up with the seeds of prayer-book Christianity, while neighboring peoples were content with a committee of gods who paid little heed to their devotees' behavior so long as they observed taboos and minded their manners with proper sacrifices? This special use of common raw materials could come of Their deciding to infect certain pastoral cultures with monotheism to give the Western world an eventual strategic nudge when Constantine saw his vision at the Milvian Bridge. If so, consequences have been gratifying.

Dream-born ironies can go beyond the elementary kind. No doubt They enjoy our attempts to live up to the Ten Commandments because a cosmic parent-schoolteacher said we had better. But our individual tragedies and comedies often lack subtlety. Now and again Omnipotence may heighten the flavor by making what the parson promised come true. A case in point occurs in *Jurgen*, James Branch Cabell's half-forgotten fantasy. It shows Jurgen's grandfather in a conventional hell scolding the attendant imps who can't get the flames as hot as he thinks his sins deserve. And Jurgen's grandmother, who believes in heaven as much as in eternal life, won't be fobbed off with mere survival along with her dear dead ones. She demands such a heaven as the Bible describes. The superintendent of the universe sends for a Bible, reads Revelation, says, well, a bit garish but anything to please—and whips up

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for her a glassy sea, choirs of seraphim, and even a presiding God of suitable majesty, wisdom, and mercy. This has the genuine feel of Their doing. No doubt when They have nothing more pungent on hand, They drop in on the fine old lady nestled deep in her made-to-order illusion for all eternity.

This suggestion—that They sometimes vouchsafe a person such a desideratum as immortality to see what he does with it and it to him—is depressingly worked out in Swift's Struldbrugs and the everlasting punishment of Tithonus for his goddess-mistress's carelessness. The second twist of irony comes right along: Certain recent observers seek to establish personal immortality as a fact through the last-moment behavior of the dying and the evidence from persons certain that they did actually die and were brought back. Both kinds of witness report blissful sensations, meetings with loved ones, and environments resembling an eternal better world. How one wishes it validity! But biochemistry intervenes. Aviation medicine recognizes a euphoria affecting aviators whom excess altitude deprives of normal oxygen supply. They feel hopeful illusions and an oppressively lively sense of well being. Now the process of dying also entails failure of oxygen supply to the brain. This gives Them the ironic meaninglessness of the dying person's euphoria and, better still, the grim joke that, since he quickly blacks out for good, the euphoria the subject feels really will, in a manner of speaking, afford him eternal bliss. But they may not relish the fourth stage—that here They inadvertently deviate into something like pity. Yet with Them one never knows.

Under Their effulgence the problem of miracles goes translucent. Suppose They occasionally allow the true believer a whimsical breach of scientific causality just to keep workaday science from getting too smug. Medicine may maintain, and soundly, that a large minority of human ailments are psychogenic; hence those sudden cures, Lourdes-fashion, under the emotional leverage of utter faith. But in some magical cases, such terms seem inapplicable; are these Their doing? One need not believe that a saint actually did sail over water in the bight of his cloak; but one may wonder whether at Cana the water may not have really turned into wine if They wished it to—if only to see the expression on the local vintner's face.

Yet such surmises have unwelcome aspects. They may validate "the occult." Maybe that half-witted old woman really was privileged to carnal congress with the Devil in the shape of a black goat because she groomed her broomstick so earnestly that They thought her faith worth rewarding. Maybe They sometimes permit that frowsy, sweaty fraud muttering five dollars' worth over her crystal ball to peer along the maze of causality into the future. Then They can gradually withdraw her

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faculty of second sight and be delighted when she drifts into faking it for the customers. And maybe, for a less fetid atmosphere, They may give the cards or dice a flick just enough times to keep the ESP researcher's zealous hopes alive.

This dwelling on Them is showily risky. It too strongly suggests the "delusions of persecution" that psychiatry lists as a major symptom in the syndrome of paranoia. Yes, the paranoiac is deadly certain "they" are out to get him, to defame, defraud, and destroy him wherever he turns. He has to dream up such a "they" because he can seldom substantiate the existence of actual malicious agents. But note, it is all *personal.* There is the distinction. Our "They" wish nobody ill or well either. They care no more about the fortunes of Their puppets than bridge players do about the queen of clubs' facial expression. Don't flatter yourself; it was no special quality that led Them to choose you from the swarm issuing from the human anthill.

Who and what are They? The question is unanswerable even assuming that They are not just a hunch based on the way things seem to go. Probably They know more than we ever will; They are supernal cousins of Job's Satan; and They may well outnumber the combined populations of Their millions of ant colonies under glass. Yet plurals may not apply. Suppose an all-observing awareness watching and relishing the squirming on *n*-million inhabited planets, while also juggling and steering particular matters on a vast number of levels to keep interest lively wherever one—or, if you like, One—cares to glance. Anyway, out of the irresponsible jumble—as our planet must seem to us in certain moods—there does seem to arise, like steam over a compost heap, a sense of fourth-dimensional awareness that we, its playthings, can sometimes faintly share. Otherwise we should lack the ability—when at our highest, far above the vulgar terror and pity of empathy—to wonder at and take a kind of backhanded pleasure in the troubles of Bligh of the *Bounty.*

They seem to know even better than we that contrast enhances art. If their pregnant fables and dirty jokes are to be pungent, the mundane participants must be heavily committed. If Henry II is to rein up in farewell to burning LeMans and tell his God that, in view of the savageries He arranges, he renounces all his chance of salvation at His hands, Henry must believe avidly in God and salvation as well as in his ruthless self. No bravery, no cowardice. There is no drama when existence is filched from an organism on a simple level of sordid misery. But suppose an environment rich in gorgeous sunsets and gracious landscapes, the potentialities of both familial and conjugal love, the vast majesty of the sea, and the delicacy of snowflakes—this could go on for

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pages—and the way we usually take it all for granted is an irony They could not savor unless They provided us those amenities and sometimes insisted that we relish them. Now the gorgeousness of sunsets comes of subtle interactions among the prismatic properties of light, the human eye, that incredible device, and the human brain, which not only registers but, being bathed in self-awareness, its own secretion, also appreciates the gorgeousness. How like Them to go to all that trouble so that a dying man can regret the sunsets he failed to marvel at!

The brain and nervous system contribute other, more deliberate agenda. Their collaboration in the strictly human context is responsible for Giotto's frescoes and Brueghel's "Winter"; Bach's Brandenburg Concertos; *Macbeth;* the Parthenon's metopes; the opening of Dryden's *Dramatic Poesy;* the Bourges Cathedral of St. Etienne; Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind"—let the reader supply his own equivalents. Apropos, those creations may betoken Their direct meddling. Though the craftsmanship of honeycomb and orioles' nests seems to have anticipated matters, it can also be taken, however grudgingly, as programming arising from variation and natural selection. Creativeness of the sort exemplified here, however, seems to have cropped up not only strangely early but abruptly. Poets and scholars consider Homer's hexameters as fine as any verses composed since. Such subtle prosody suddenly surfacing among the peasant-pirates of the Aegean 3,000 years ago? The drawings of animals in the caves of Lascaux are works of a brilliance never since surpassed. Those smelly, fur-clad tribesmen suddenly showing unsurpassable skill-genius 20,000 years ago? One can only be grateful without further questioning for Their decision to arrange these.

For Their processes are almost impossible to glimpse, let alone grasp. The wastefulness of Their amusements! The human brain absorbs and delights in the details of life and weaves them into what amounts to a minor universe of its own. Then the physical system sustaining it dies, and the appended brain that wrought these wonders turns into a small, corrupting mass of commonplace chemicals. Why take millions of years to design a computer faster than any IBM will ever make, store it with data too subtle and too varied for IBM, only soon to smash it, data and all? Yet that happens millions of times a year. Whatever pleasure They get out of that must be of a kind we cannot understand—or care to.

Conversely, it may amuse Them when we, as here, resent their inscrutable doings. For all their arrogance, however, They must brook one thing: Job's story would lack interest had he not long been happy with his family and livestock. The Petri dish that They use is lewd and cruel. But unless They make it sunshiny, too, it won't answer Their purposes; it must be as beautiful as God's footstool should be. Fall in love or have a dry martini—that triumph of sybaritic technology—and

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forever after you are one up on Them. We cannot be sure They value sunsets and martinis; as, though a dog hears things you can't, he is color-blind. So, in view of the probable high-and-dryness of Their dispositions, They must accept with equanimity, if not cordiality, our intervals of delight. Insects and oysters are not so privileged—a side effect of self-awareness strangest of all.

Mathematicians have a delicate criterion pertinent here: among considerations in weighing up a new theorem is its technical beauty. In their experience, the thing likelier to prove up is usually harmoniously simple. In that light, most of the above flunks out. It is untidy, capricious, inconsistent, ugly, disquieting, improbable—almost as improbable as the universe into which pursuit of truth inveigled the astrophysicist.

But there is still better reason to reject the contention that it is irony, irony, irony, lubricated by sporadic obscenities, that makes the world go round. Nothing that fits the data so well but is incapable of demonstration could conceivably be valid.

They will have seen to that.

From the Diary of a Royal Psalmist

JUDAH GOLDIN

Let me enjoy her and not sin.
Let me sin and repent.
Let me repent and be forgiven.
Forgive me in the future as in the past.

Let the Day of Atonement atone.
Let my sufferings be counted an atonement.
Let my death atone for all my sins.
Regard them as peccadillos, pardon my dust.

I shall now write a psalm in praise of the Lord.

JUDAH GOLDIN is professor of oriental studies at the University of Pennsylvania and the author of *Living Talmud* and *The Song at the Sea*.

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Paris, 1840

ELAINE BRODY

An Austrian artist by the name of Josef Danhauser (1805–1845) painted Franz Liszt and his friends in a picture variously entitled *Liszt am Klavier, Souvenirs de Liszt,* and *Paris, 1840.* I used to think that the title simply changed according to the locale in which the work was exhibited, but I have seen it under each of these three names here in America. Liszt certainly knew all of the illustrious musicians and writers included in this group portrait, but whether or not they ever posed together or whether, indeed, they *could* have posed together in Paris in 1840 were questions that aroused my curiosity. Furthermore, the sight of Liszt, his Countess, George Sand, Hugo, Dumas, Paganini, and Rossini together at one time in one place tempted me to speculate about the interrelationships of creative artists in the French capital at that time.

In the picture, Liszt is featured prominently at the keyboard of an ornate midcentury piano; its sheet-music rack holds both square and oblong musical editions while another sheaf of music rests on the turned back cover of the piano. At the pianist's feet sits the Countess d'Agoult, with whom he has already had three children, one of whom, Cosima, will become the first wife of the celebrated pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow and, later, the second wife of Richard Wagner. Their elder daughter Blandine, will marry Émile Ollivier, a French statesman and premier of France under Louis Napoleon. The composer himself is not sitting on a piano chair, but on a long bench that is covered in a printed fabric, a woven tapestry, whose design forms an appropriate backdrop to the brown velvet shawl that the Countess has wrapped around her shoulders. The shawl almost reaches her waist and covers the upper portion of the crisp taffeta of her long gown.

In a chair behind Liszt, looking every bit the romantic writer, George Sand, with a cigar clasped between her fingers, lounges dreamily, presumably induced to such activity by the poetic sounds emanating from Liszt's piano—although she may be thinking about Chopin, with whom she lives at this time. Struck by the sound of the music, she extends her right hand to Dumas *père,* seated beside her. He has an open book in his hands and looks quizzically at Liszt's back and at the music, which he cannot see or read, on the rack. Behind Sand and Dumas, visible between them, stands Victor Hugo. With his right hand placed on the wooden frame of Dumas's chair and his left hand holding a book, he rests his arm on the corner of Sand's chair. Hugo's expression does not reflect Gide's description of him as "the greatest French author of the nineteenth century." To the right of Hugo are Paganini and Rossini, the latter with his arm around the gaunt, tubercular violinist. Both look more intently at the bust of Beethoven (also the work of the artist Danhauser) than at Liszt, who is playing the piano upon which it rests. On the wall behind Rossini hangs a framed picture of Lord Byron, whose works provided inspiration for musicians and artists as different as Berlioz and Delacroix (see their respective *Sardanapale*), Schumann and Tchaikovsky (compare their versions of *Manfred*), Verdi *(I due Foscari)* and Liszt *(Mazeppa,* via Victor Hugo). The room appears to be a salon, although the guests are nowhere in evidence. The painter has captured and locked this galaxy of artists in an unforgettable moment in time.

Not yet thirty, Liszt in 1840 basked in the

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admiration of his public. At the height of his prowess as a virtuoso pianist, he had recently come to a decision that would change the direction of his life. In November 1839, after the birth in Rome of their third child and only son, Daniel, Liszt parted from his mistress Marie, the Countess d'Agoult. Their passionate idyll of the last five years had lost its attraction, and he had begun to feel confined. To the Countess he gave as one reason for his abrupt departure the news he received from Hungary of sudden floods in the capital city of Pest. To raise money for the relief of its victims, Liszt embarked on a concert tour that took him to various European cities. He went immediately to his birthplace, Raiding, and also visited several other Hungarian towns. He continued with concerts in Vienna, Prague, Dresden, Leipzig, Metz, Paris, London, Brussels, numerous Rhineland towns in Germany, and also Ems, Hamburg, Scotland, and Ireland. He even made a second English visit later in the year.

Another reason for the tour, one with which the Countess was already familiar, concerned the financial difficulties of the committee to raise funds for a monument to Beethoven. The Bonn committee planned to complete the structure in 1837, in time for a decennial celebration. (Beethoven had died in March of 1827.) As early as 1835, Liszt wrote several prominent musicians and patrons requesting contributions. At that date, much in demand for concerts and recitals, he anticipated making a substantial contribution himself; unencumbered socially, he still had money to spare. His financial situation, however, changed during the time spent with the Countess in Switzerland. He had given far fewer concerts, his pride precluded accepting funds from her, and he had become anxious about his position. (Robert Schumann, to whom he wrote for funds, idealized Beethoven but could not come up with the essential monies. Instead, Schumann decided to compose a work dedicated to the memory of Beethoven, using themes of the master woven into the musical fabric. He expected that the proceeds from the sale of this piece, his Fantasy in C Major, would revert to Bonn as his share of the expenses for the monument.) By 1839, still far from their goal, the committee reached Liszt, who immediately offered to foot the bill for the remaining funds, provided he could select the sculptor. He suggested one Bartolini, whom he knew well, and he even explained how, under certain circumstances, the monument could be constructed at a more moderate price. To amass the necessary funds for his promised donation, Liszt began to prepare for a large number of concerts. The Countess tried to delay his departure, but his mind was made up. Liszt sent her and their two daughters back to Paris, where she found an apartment in which she could suitably entertain Balzac, Lamartine, Hugo, and their friends. Her lover left for Hungary and the conquest of new audiences.

To the touring Liszt the Countess reports about her visitors and their activities, hoping to make him jealous so that he will cut short his journey and come back to her. Her letters suggest that a mistress, then as now, does not have the easiest life. Determined to hold him against overwhelming odds, Marie writes vividly of the life she leads in Paris. But she cannot disguise her feelings, and at some point in each letter, she manages to direct a few barbs in the direction of her lover, whose only reaction one surmises to be delight that he is not there to feel the sting of her tongue in person. She explains that her sister-in-law will not enter her home, owing to the Countess's current status as mistress of the pianist Liszt. She is certain that, were they to marry, he would be accepted by her family. Pressure has mounted for her to return to the Count, her husband, who has agreed to a reconciliation. Evidently, flights of passion such as hers have not been unique to their family. Among their friends, others, too, have recently reconciled. Her brother Maurice pleads earnestly, "Will you please return?"

Their children are scattered. The two girls live with Liszt's mother in her apartment in Paris, Daniel with a wet nurse in Rome. When queried while on tour by colleagues who wonder how he lives without them, Liszt explains that he would see them so infrequently under any circumstances that they're better off with his mother. His letters are replete with details of receptions, concerts, and expenses. He sends the Countess assurance of his fidelity and only occasionally mentions the unending flow of pretty young girls he encounters. He admits that he always seems to have the women on his side. As for

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the men, he has to work harder to win them over. He keeps so busy, sometimes till the early hours of the morning, with royalty who prefer such a schedule and sleep late mornings. Often he cannot find two minutes to write to her, but she should please keep writing to him. He also requests certain favors: that she tell his mother where he is; that she place the appropriate reviews and notices (copies of which he has sent her) in the Paris journals; that she reserve Érard's hall for him for two concerts in April and early May, when he expects to spend some time in Paris. He has purchased a new brougham; he's certain she'll enjoy it.

She asks how he feels about infidelity. Both Potocki and Bulwer, two foreigners, compete for her favors, and she is sorely pressed to choose between them. Potocki has threatened suicide, she warns Liszt. Bulwer is prepared to cement their relationship by adopting at least one of her daughters. Liszt tries to avoid discussion of all personal matters. Repeatedly challenged by the Countess, he finally replies in all candor (and with less than the hoped-for outrage) that he knows her to be a noble woman who acts with delicacy. She must do what makes her happy. Should she meet somebody who better meets her needs, she must leave him. Exasperated, she explains he's her life, her flesh and blood, she cannot continue much longer without him.

When he is about to return to Paris, Liszt asks that she alert his mother that he is coming. "Mother will be pleased," he says, "and it will be good for the children and a lot cheaper for me than staying at a hotel. If you have any extra furniture, send it along to my mother's for me." She berates him repeatedly. "All you talk about is yourself, your concerts, your public, your dinners, your reviews, the impression you make on royalty. From me you want only favors, chores to be done. Can't you write me something of your love, something of the old Franz I knew?"

To these questions he does not reply. Increasingly pleased with his reception on the concert circuit, Liszt reports that Prague must surely be the most musical of cities. As for Paris, he feels that he will have tremendous success there when he returns for his two concerts. She warns him: "Thalberg is here; the public adores him. At least wait until they ask you to play. Don't make arrangements beforehand." He does not listen and insists he will succeed. She should just speak to Érard about the hall, and now he has also decided to stay at a hotel. She must reserve a suite for him and a room for his manservant, a most discreet one whom he knows will please her, and she's to spend no more than 300 to 350 francs per night.

In line with the custom among upper-class citizens, they address each other always in the polite form *vous*. In only one letter of 1840, and in only one small part of that letter, does she *tutoyer* him. Another feature of their styles is the inclusion of comments, phrases, and sentences, in English, German, and Italian. Apparently, they both used these languages as well as French.

For a few weeks in April of 1840, Liszt returns to Paris, gives his concerts, and dallies with the Countess, at least long enough to permit her, once again, to show her face to society. Far from a doting father, he nonetheless still maintains sufficient interest in his children's upbringing and gives instructions about them to both his mother and to Marie. Despite his heavy concert schedule, Liszt has produced a number of fine compositions that year. They include *Mazeppa,* the *Galop de Bal*, the *Etudes de perfectionnement,* and an operatic paraphase from Bellini's opera *La Sonnambula.* (Bellini had died five years earlier in 1835, but his operas, works such as *Norma, La Sonnambula*, and *I Puritani,* maintained their popularity at the Opéra.) Liszt also completed the pieces of the first book of *Années de pèlerinage,* five choruses with texts of Racine and Chateaubriand, and a thoughtful funeral essay on Paganini, who passed away on May 27, 1840, in Nice. The essay appeared in Maurice Schlesinger's *Revue et Gazette musicale* of August 23, 1840.

The Countess d'Agoult is not a lovable creature. Yet any time spent in examining her past repays the effort, particularly in view of what we know of her daughter Cosima's virulent anti-Semitism. Marie d'Agoult was the daughter of the impoverished Vicomte de Flavigny, who arrived in Frankfurt, Germany, sometime after 1800 and there married a twenty-eight-year-old widow, Elisabeth Bettmann. Bettmann had inherited a considerable sum of money from her own family of bankers, whose Jewish origins vexed her son Maurice, but not Marie who preferred to ignore such

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facts—she must have known them, of course. She also enjoyed the independence and the comforts this money could bring. In imitation of the prevailing attitude toward Jews, she sprinkles her letters with occasional anti-Semitic comments without regard for her own ancestry. At the age of twenty-two, in 1827, Marie married the Count d'Agoult, fourteen years her senior and, unfortunately, lame. She soon tired of his company and unexciting life, and in 1835, after eight years of marriage and two children, Louise and Claire, she left home and husband and went to live with Liszt in Switzerland. (Louise died shortly before her mother's flight. In letters to the composer, Marie tells Liszt that at her daughter's deathbed, all she could think about was him.) She left Paris with her mother and brother Maurice, both of whom unknowingly escorted her to her rendezvous with the composer in Geneva.

Proud, petulant, and very possessive, Marie d'Agoult made life difficult for the composer. At thirty, she was six years older than Liszt, and that at a time when women aged far more rapidly than they do today. Compared with a woman like George Sand—a prolific writer who adored her children, took them with her wherever she could, attracted a coterie of gifted men and women who sought her company, and led the life of a liberated woman a century ahead of her time—Marie d'Agoult soon lost some of her appeal. In 1836, when Liszt and the Countess settled in Geneva, Sand and her children—Maurice, then thirteen, and Solange, eight—joined them. The Countess was not comfortable with this arrangement, one reason being that the public at large seemed to feel that Liszt and Sand were lovers (and about this Marie was never sure one way or another), but she did not complain lest these complaints force her lover into the other woman's arms.

The following year, after a few months at her estate in Nohant, where she went to settle a lawsuit against her husband, George Sand arrived in Paris and took an apartment in the Hôtel de France, where Liszt and the Countess lived. There Sand held forth in her salon, and the Countess—although fretful about returning to Paris and the scene of her former life with d'Agoult—delighted in the opportunity to meet many of the prominent writers, musicians, and painters of the day. Sand knew them all and regularly entertained Eugène Sue, Berlioz, Heine, Gautier, Delacroix, Jules Janin, etc. One year was all they could manage successfully. Their quasi ménage à trois dissolved in 1838, Sand allowing in a letter that as long as Liszt preferred Marie, he must have her—to himself. Sand moved out.

Aurore Dupin, George Sand's birth name, was born in Paris in 1804. After the death of her father, she and her mother went to live at Nohant, the estate of her paternal grandmother, a woman who showed little affection for her daughter-in-law, but determined to raise Aurore as her own. Perhaps to escape the clutches of Grandmother Dupin, Aurore married Baron Dudevant, a dissolute cad by whom she had two children. Unhappy in marriage, but unwilling to give up her children, Aurore Dudevant sought a way to provide for them and for herself without a husband. Like other gifted women of her day, she discovered a solution in her talents as a novelist. She moved back to Paris in 1831 where she became a successful and prolific writer under the pseudonym George Sand. She met Liszt, probably through their mutual friend Alfred de Musset, in 1834, after her return from Venice, where she had nursed de Musset through a severe illness—but dallied with his doctor throughout de Musset's convalescence.

Sand encountered Chopin in Paris in the fall of 1836, after she had asked Liszt to bring him to one of the salons at which she and the Countess entertained. Chopin's initial impression of the woman with whom he would ultimately spend almost ten years of his life was hardly favorable; yet by 1838 they were living together openly. Winters, except for one in Majorca, were spent in Paris, and each summer, except for that of 1840, when Chopin needed to work in the city, they retired to Nohant in the South. There Sand continued her hectic social schedule, entertaining such guests as Pauline Garcia-Viardot (the lover of Turgenev), Adolphe Nourrit, Adam Mickiewicz, and others.

It appears then, that of those included in the Danhauser portrait, Sand, Liszt, and the Countess might have been together in Paris, at least in the spring of 1840.

Unlike Sand and the Countess, Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas were genuinely close friends, although possessed of utterly differ-

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ent personalities. Hugo and his wife, Adèle, lived in what appeared to be a model household until 1833, when the facade of their marriage shattered. Adèle became the companion (and more) of her husband's friend, the critic Sainte-Beuve, while Hugo himself took up with the actress Juliette Drouet. Living a life of concubinage, Dumas never subscribed to middle-class morality; he married neither of the women who bore his children. Instead, in 1840, he bound himself in matrimony to one Ida Ferrier, an actress whose glamor had already begun to fade. Unfortunately for Hugo and Dumas, their women became competitive, often vying for the same role, and the rivalry between Drouet and Ferrier at one time seriously threatened their own friendship.

More than most of his contemporaries, Hugo showed an interest in early music, which he heard at concerts given in Paris by Fétis in the early 1830s. He also enjoyed Schubert's lieder and Weber's *Der Freischütz* and *Euryanthe*, and he especially admired Beethoven, regarding him among the foremost artists of all time. Unlike many of his friends, he did not care for Italian operas, then the rage of Paris. Because he opposed the transformation of his own plays into operas, he was often thought to dislike music. Yet his sentiments notwithstanding, an astonishing number of his dramas, novels, verse plays, and poetry attracted composers from Adam to Widor. Among the better known musical compositions inspired by Hugo's works are the opera *Hernani*, one by Verdi, and an incomplete setting by Bellini; Verdi's *Rigoletto*, based on Hugo's *Le Roi s'amuse;* Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia;* Mendelssohn's *Ruy Blas* overture and chorus; *Les Orientales*, for which Liszt, Berlioz, Wagner, Saint-Saëns, and d'Indy wrote songs; and piano pieces by Liszt and MacDowell. Another two hundred works including operas, ballets, songs, chamber music, etc., were inspired by his literary pieces.

Dumas had no such influence on music and musicians, although the way he lived showed some similarities to the life of Liszt and the Countess. Ida Ferrier and Dumas lived together openly in the rue Bleue in Paris from about the end of 1833. She was not pleased with his children, and Dumas was therefore obliged to meet his son Alexandre (whose *La Dame aux Camélias* became the great hit of the latter part of the century) outside their home. Dumas and Ferrier entertained often, but their guests were mostly men. Women concerned with propriety scorned their salon, and Ferrier, who wielded greater influence over her man than did the Countess over Liszt, refused to let him see any other women except the actress Mlle Mars, whom she tolerated at their table. As their circle of friends widened, Dumas moved to larger quarters on the rue de Rivoli. Here Ferrier established a laboratory, where she spent hours preparing for her evening appearances. Her skill with makeup anticipated by thirty years the days when women of good society applied maquillage before making a public appearance. Ferrier and Dumas finally married in 1840, and it is possible that Dumas could have posed for Danhauser's group portrait in Paris that spring.

Rossini, estranged from his first wife, the singer Isabella Colbran, was now living with Olympe Pélissier. The composer had left Paris for Italy in October 1836, and Olympe followed in February of 1837. In Milan, during the winter of 1837–38, their home echoed to the laughter and music of countless soirées and salons similar to those they would later hold in Passy, outside Paris. Pélissier, who had fearful problems with digestion, complained constantly that she and Rossini ate too much. They settled finally in Bologna—his father had died there in 1839—where Rossini acted as consultant to the municipal Liceo Musicale until ill health forced him to curtail his activities.

At the height of his career, before the premiere of *William Tell* in 1829, Rossini had negotiated a contract with the then government of France, in which he agreed to provide four new operas in return for a lifetime annuity. After the fall of the monarchy in the July Revolution of 1830, the succeeding government refused to honor the obligations of Charles X, and Rossini paid them back in kind. For one reason or another, no further operas flowed from his pen. He had accumulated sufficient funds and, after his Italian sojourn, returned in 1855 to Paris, where he lived in luxury until his death in 1868.

Rossini could not have posed for the 1840 portrait; he was not in France.

During the winter of 1840 Paganini had not

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been well. In his letters he complains of increasing weakness, profuse expectoration, constant insomnia, and a fiendish cough. Toward the spring his condition worsened rapidly. The local priest tried in every way to bring him back to the fold and grant him absolution before he expired, but Paganini remained unrepentant to the end. He died in his fifty-eighth year on May 27, 1840, at five o'clock in the afternoon, in Nice, a city to which he had gone in the vain hope that the climate there would cure him. Stingy to the point of denying himself creature comforts when on tour and paranoid to the extent of refusing to notate his highly complicated *violinistic figurations lest others appropriate* them, Paganini would not willingly have joined with colleagues for a group portrait. He generally posed alone.

As the city entered the fifth decade of the nineteenth century, Paris counted among her citizenry musicians, dancers, painters, writers, poets, dramatists, and critics, the likes of whom regularly tantalize those of us who can only view the situation at a distance of 150 years. Besides Liszt, among musicians alone, Wagner, Chopin, Berlioz, Kalkbrenner, Thalberg, Hallé, Fétis, Vieuxtemps, de Bériot, the brothers Henri and Jacques Herz, Stephen Heller, Meyerbeer, and Donizetti made the French capital their home, at least during the winter season. Singers who graced the opera houses and the Théâtre-Italien included Giuditta Pasta, Giulia Grisi, Pauline Garcia-Viardot, Duprez, Tamburini, Mario, and Lablache, while the playwright Scribe and the phenomenally gifted Jewish actress Rachel dominated the French stage. Artists, many of whom befriended and painted these musicians and singers, included Delacroix, Ary Scheffer, Ingres, Vernet, and Henri Lehmann, the last named a particular favorite of the Countess d'Agoult. Writers, several of whom dabbled in painting or occasionally tried their hand at music and art criticism, included Théophile Gautier, Prosper Mérimée, Honoré de Balzac, Gerard Nerval (who also translated Goethe's *Faust*), Alfred de Vigny, Lamartine, and Jules Janin, literary critic of the prestigious *Journal des débats*, whose masthead also carried the name of Hector Berlioz as music critic.

Two writers who settled in Paris, Heinrich Heine and Heinrich Laube, bore the stigma of their German origins, yet managed to mingle successfully with many of the artists cited above. Journals and letters provide us with a fairly accurate account of events in this glittering era of French history. A brief excerpt from a description by one of these foreigners on the scene, Wagner, merits a brief detour in our story.

From Wagner we learn that Liszt had returned to Paris in April 1840. At the suggestion of Laube, who, besides his literary efforts, was a leader of a group known as The Young Germans, Wagner called on the peripatetic Hungarian. He found the pianist surrounded by admirers, all of whom spoke French, which Wagner, already a year and a half in Paris, had not mastered. Uncomfortable when he could not bring the conversation around to himself, Wagner departed, but not without first leaving his address. Liszt's secretary sent the aspiring opera composer a ticket to the pianist's April 6 recital, and Wagner attended the performance but resented Liszt's success and the fact that he had incurred no expenses along with it. "He is the solo performer," he reported to Minna, his wife. "He charged 20 francs a ticket for admission and he earned a total of 10,000 francs!" The realization sent Wagner to bed with a headache. He even had to leave the concert early. A second concert on May 5, at which Liszt played and Berlioz conducted, prompted Wagner to write the Dresden newspaper for whom he was the Paris critic, saying: "Liszt makes money with no expenses, while Berlioz has expenses and makes no money." Young Wagner here reveals a sense of humor and a way with words that will disappear in later years.

Returning now to Danhauser, whose portrait of the seven creative artists is the point of departure for this essay: Who was this Danhauser? What do we know about him and his relationships with the musical world of his day?

It is far easier to trace the whereabouts of his subjects than to learn about the painter himself. The card catalogue at New York University's celebrated Institute of Fine Arts yielded no clue; but the Watson Library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art proved more helpful. Three articles in turgid German prose from the turn of the century, when the Viennese, fortunately for us, decided to celebrate

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Josef Danhauser's centennial, disclosed the following pertinent data.

Josef Danhauser was born in Vienna on August 18, 1805, to well-to-do bourgeois parents. His father owned a furniture factory and expected that his three sons would join him in this enterprise, but Josef, his eldest, preferred the arts to industry. He showed musical talent as a child and studied the violin with Joseph Mayseder (1789–1863), a prominent Austrian violinist and composer who played second violin in the famous Schuppanzigh Quartet. Schuppanzigh, the first violinist, was a close friend of Beethoven, and his quartet presented many of the first performances of Beethoven's chamber music. (Danhauser also did a portrait of Schuppanzigh; it hangs today in the Museum der Stadt Wien.)

Although music remained a lifelong interest, his attraction to arts and crafts, motivated no doubt by exposure to his father's wares, drew him closer to his chosen profession. His father's designing instincts surfaced in him in his gift for painting. Young Danhauser enrolled at the Vienna Academy in 1824 and soon came under the influence of the realist painter Peter Krafft, an anti-romantic who rejected fantasies and glorification of the past and urged Danhauser to stick to the present, to observe nature carefully, and to paint realistically. In his journal, Danhauser reveals himself torn between the weltschmerz of his generation and the practical realism espoused by his teacher. A contemplative artist, he philosophizes about the various opposing ideals and concepts that intrigue him.

In Biedermeier Vienna, Friedrich von Amerling and Ferdinand Waldmüller were the most prominent painters in the Austrian capital. They fashioned Ingres-like portraits to answer the demand of Viennese aristocrats introduced to this style through the visits of the British painter Thomas Lawrence during the Congress of Vienna. Waldmüller, who also did an excellent portrait of Beethoven, made landscape painting a mode of escape from the increasingly industrialized city. Danhauser, still unsure of the route he would follow, decided to visit Germany, Belgium, and Holland on a tour of museums. The works of Rubens, particularly his portraits and interiors, especially appealed to him. On his return to Vienna, he announced: "Nun weiss ich was ich will und soll."

With Rubens still on his mind, Danhauser sought a way to see some pictures by Titian at first hand. An opportunity presented itself in 1826 when a family friend, Ladislaus Pyrker, Archbishop of Venice and also a painter, invited him to spend some time there. In that glorious city, the mecca of so many nineteenth century artists, he began to recognize the power of light and how it could affect both landscapes and interiors. His notebooks are replete with comments on this phenomenon; they also reveal a man at pains to declare himself. He rejects the idea of *l'art pour l'art*; he shows concern for *Das Volk* and hopes to stimulate a love for art among them. At the same time, he writes his brother Franz: "I sometimes have to play the hypocrite, although I really don't like being forced to do anything—to paint under compulsion."

Pyrker must have been a most unusual cleric. Although he did considerable painting, no card catalogue in any library I checked listed his name. Yet in a serendipitous moment, as I scanned the index of a Schubert volume in order to locate the dates of another Viennese painter, Moritz von Schwind, I suddenly found my eye drawn to one "Pyrker Felsö-Eör, Johann Ladislaus." A dozen entries told me more than I needed to know. Archbishop Pyrker evidently did not confine his interest in the arts to painting alone.

Pyrker (1773–1847) was born in Lángh, Hungary, and entered the Cistercian monastery in Lilienfeld, Lower Austria, in 1792. He became Bishop of Zips (Hungary) in 1818 and Archbishop (Patriarch) of Venice in 1820. Pyrker met Franz Schubert at the home of their mutual friend Matthäus von Collin, a poet and editor of the *Jahrbuch der Literatur*; they met again in 1825 at the baths in Badgastein. Schubert dedicated five of his lieder to Pyrker. Two, *Die Allmacht and Das Heimweh*, are set to texts by the prelate.

On March 26, 1828, at the *Musikverein* in Vienna, Schubert gave a private concert, a benefit consisting of the usual nineteenth century potpourri of pieces: a movement from a string quartet and his new piano trio, also several lieder to texts by Seidl, Rellstab, Grillparzer—whom Danhauser later painted—and Ladislaus Pyrker. The songs were sung by Schubert's friend Michael Vogl with the composer at the piano. All of the pieces, of course, were by Schubert. Almost a year later, on

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Friday, January 30, 1829, at a memorial concert to raise funds for a monument for the recently deceased composer, Pyrker's lied *Die Allmacht* again appeared on the program, this time presented by Schoberlechner, a lesser-known singer. (A lithograph of Pyrker by August Prinzhofer can be found in O. E. Deutsch's Schubert iconography.)

Pyrker had prodded Danhauser to try his hand at religious subjects. Yet, with the exception of a single mural painted on an exterior wall of the Stefanskirche on his return to Vienna (and long since destroyed), biblical subjects held little fascination for the young man. Pyrker was disappointed and proceeded to berate him in frequent letters from Italy. Fortunately for us, Danhauser had his own ideas about painting in general and his métier in particular.

He soon acquired a reputation for portrait painting, confirmed by the following bit of Beethoveniana. On March 27, 1828, as Beethoven lay dying, Stefan von Breuning wrote Anton Schindler, Beethoven's amanuensis, that "early tomorrow morning Danhauser wants to come over to make a cast of Beethoven's countenance." Theodor von Frimmel, the renowned Beethoven scholar, disputed the matter in 1892, believing that Danhauser was too young to have penetrated the circle of Beethoven's intimates at that time. Yet posterity has accepted Beethoven's death mask as the work of Danhauser; and Liszt, noting his worldly goods in a will of 1860, mentions the Beethoven death mask and reports that he received it from Danhauser personally.

Another citizen of Vienna at this time was Konrad Graf (1782–1851). Born in Germany of Austrian parents, Graf moved to Vienna in 1799 and worked for the piano manufacturer Jacob Schelkle, whose widow he married in 1804. Graf was named royal court piano and instrument maker in 1824, and a few years later he set up his shop in the fashionable Mondscheinhaus, where his instruments competed successfully against those of Streicher and Stein. In 1835 Graf won a gold medal at the first Viennese exhibition of industrial products. He was not an innovator, rather a maker of fine instruments. The typical Graf piano had a range of six octaves plus a fourth or fifth, all wood construction, and three to five pedals. On his arrival in Vienna in 1829, Chopin gave his first recital on a Graf piano. In the hallowed rooms of the Schwarzspanierhaus, Beethoven's last residence, a Graf stood beside the composer's Broadwood from London. Liszt customarily played a Graf piano not only in concert, but also in Graf's atelier, where he practiced before playing in public. It was at Graf's that Liszt first heard young Clara Schumann perform. The piano manufacturer also presented one of his instruments to Robert and Clara Schumann on the occasion of their marriage in 1840. (In that year, too, Danhauser painted a portrait of Konrad Graf.)

Fifteen years had passed since Liszt had first performed in Vienna as a child prodigy. Much of that time he had remained outside the country, mostly in France. Two triumphal visits to the Austrian capital in 1838 and 1839 had been cut short by the Countess's illness. Now he was returning as a mature artist, a world-famous virtuoso.

Now, Herr Graf was no slouch. In Liszt's sudden appearance on the scene, Graf saw an opportunity and decided to make the most of it. Since Danhauser had an excellent reputation as a portrait painter, the piano merchant speculated: Why not hire him to do a series of paintings showing the Graf piano as the choice of noted artists of the time? And this is precisely what Konrad Graf did, thus making it fairly certain that the group assembled around Liszt at the piano in Paris in 1840 was, in fact, a figment of Graf's imagination, the project of a man well ahead of his time, the dream of a nineteenth century Madison Avenue adman.

Liszt am Klavier now resides in the Berlin National Gallery.

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The Discreet Pleasures of the Bourgeoisie

PETER GAY

Whether they reveled in it or feared it, contemporary observers could agree that the nineteenth-century middle-class family was the supreme haven of privacy. Behind its sheltered walls one might retreat to shut out meddling magistrates, inquisitive neighbors, even intrusive men of the cloth. Especially in view of the unabashed scrutiny to which sexual conduct had been exposed just two centuries earlier, and was still exposed in frontier settlements here and there, the modern domestic setting offered unsurpassed protection from unwanted witnesses. Some, contemplating privacy, this great invention, grew thoughtful, even philosophical. "Behind every man's external life, which he leads in company," wrote Walter Bagehot in 1853, "there is another which he leads alone, and which he carries with him apart. We see but one aspect of our neighbour, as we see but one side of the moon." After all, "we all come down to dinner, but each has a room to himself." Bagehot was musing about the capacity of the "great painters of men"—he was talking about Shakespeare—for solitude. But his homely metaphor was singularly apt. The nineteenth century was an age in which members of the middle classes aspired to rooms of their own.

Yet within the fortified precincts of family life, privacy was far from complete, as parents did some prying of their own. They would open their children's letters, superintend their reading, chaperon their visitors, inspect their underwear. If parents exacted truthfulness from their children, this all too often served as a screen for the brutal assertion of adult power, as an arrogant, and at time prurient, invasion of young lives. Moreover, like comfort, privacy depended on physical settings and objects, and material conditions were often far from adequate for its realization. Privacy required a door one could close, an hour one could call one's own, a desk one could lock, and many bourgeois, young or old, did not have all, or any, of these advantages. And many who did were not allowed to enjoy them.

Not even diaries, those proverbial incarnations of privacy, were wholly safe from intrusions, whether welcomed or unauthorized. It was not in novels alone that parents or husbands took advantage of the diarist's absence to uncover secrets not meant for their eyes. And the sharing of diaries could be one-sided. In the spring of 1886, Mary I. Barrows, then in boarding school in Connecticut, recorded in her journal: "I was sometime in Etta's room this morning reading her diary & mine." But when Etta asked "to read mine," Mary Barrows would not let her. There were not a few diarists, of course, who wrote with an audience in mind—a husband, a grandchild, posterity. Cosima Wagner kept her copious diary entries as much for Richard Wagner as for herself. The Alcott girls wrote their journals for their family: "In looking over our journals," Louisa May Alcott noted, "Father says, 'Anna's is about other people, Louisa's about herself.' " Yet, however imperfect as protective confessor, the nineteenth-century diary remains a historic artifact; it provides access to one of the defining characteristics of the modern bourgeois experience. Nearly all cultures, we know, draw some line, more or less

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distinct, between the personal and public spheres. But nineteenth-century middle-class culture was particularly emphatic about this, making the gulf between private and public as wide as it could manage. In such a culture the diary, or its expansive cousin, the journal, were bound to flourish, and it is only just that the nineteenth century should be the golden age for both.

The keeping of diaries—the writing of journals—is, to be sure, an occupation with a long and distinguished history. Leonardo da Vinci filled his celebrated diary with scientific speculations, architectural designs, financial records, sketches of human bodies, and a single illuminating memory of his childhood; the diaries of John Evelyn and Samuel Pepys are prized treasures in the English literature of fact; unknown scores of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Puritans and Pietists noted their daily doings or, more anxiously, their progress in piety. James Boswell recorded his memorable conversations and his sexual exploits with the evenhanded indiscriminateness of the born collector, preserving both in meticulous detail and with enviable precision. But in an individualistic, introspective, and reticent century like the nineteenth, the diary and the journal proved particularly congenial and became almost obligatory companions to a class endowed with a modicum of leisure. Teachers would assign diaries as a praiseworthy and healthy activity; adolescents spread among their friends the taste for this written restricted form of exhibitionism. And parents presented their children with blank books, often festively bound and decorated, to encourage youngsters in the habit of chronicling their days and their little adventures.

On March 19, 1874, Edward Tallmadge Root received just such a book which, as the title page in his mother's hand discloses, was "a birthday gift from Mama." The diarist's first entry sets the tone, not without humor. "Today is my 9th birthday, I got this book to write in and a candy bird A hoop to roll, a box of colored pencils, and some little books, and a bad cold." On April 8, Mrs. Root gave the same present to Edward's younger brother Willie, evidently a precocious little boy: "Today is my birth day," he wrote, letter perfect and remiss only in his punctuation. "I got this book and a new pair of shoes harmonica and a comb I am seven year's old." Both brothers wrote mainly about kittens, but did not forget trips, the weather, visits, and a few exceptional events: "Mr. Golden the saloon keeper has surrenddered to the Ladies of the Temperance League," Edward Root, every inch the preacher's son, recorded on April 12, 1874, and, on the following day: "The Ladies went down today and got Mr Golden's pledge to neither sell or drink." He gave space to religion once again three years later: "This is my Resolve," he wrote solemnly in April 1877, when he was twelve. "I love Jesus and I mean to serve him all my life. Edward T. Root." There were thousands of Willie and Edward Roots across the Western world, scribbling in their books, mainly in smudgy pencil, berating themselves for not keeping up their entries more conscientiously, and vowing to do better. "Poor journal." Thus Edward Root in January 1879. "It is a long time since I last wrote." It was true enough: he had made the previous entry seven months before. But he did not reform: in May of that year he ruefully noted, "Poor journal it is long since I last wrote in you." It was as though he were apologizing to a valued friend he had neglected.

Adults often criticized their own indolence in words much like these. But many diarists were assiduous, faithful to their silent friend. Generally speaking, women were more likely to keep up the habit; they were often forced into postures of contemplation. Though busy to exhaustion as wives and mothers, they would use their quiet moments to reflect in writing on the day just past. But men, too, kept journals and, more frequently, laconic diaries to fix their experiences, even their inner experiences, for their later perusal.

These personal records performed many services for many people. Some used them as medicine: Harriot K. Hunt, America's first woman physician and the most religious of autobiographers, recalled at least one patient to whom she prescribed a written exercise in inwardness. Cold, isolated, self-centered, depressed, this young patient had turned her back on her mother's moral preachments to lead a fashionable life. "Abandon all medicine," Harriot Hunt told her, "commence a diary; go back into the chambers of the past, catch up your mother's lessons." And the results were nothing short of miraculous. Self-

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revelations of this sort were much else besides: a benign superego, a preserver of memories, raw material for formal autobiography, an intimate arena for settling troublesome religious, ethical, and sexual conundrums, an aid in rehearsing identifications with idealized figures. Best of all, though sometimes written in obedience to formula or with a self-awareness victimized by self-consciousness, they were someone to talk to: Leonardo addressed himself in his diary in the second person, behaving, as Sigmund Freud put it, like someone accustomed to confessing daily to someone else. So did Henry James, urging himself on to hold converse with his alter ego: "*causons, causons, mon bon.*" It was an exacting genre, to be pursued responsibly, sincerely. A diary, Frieda von Kronoff warned her youthful women readers in the *Töchter-album* of 1902, should not be a gathering of trivia, a list of beaux and presents, or a storehouse of egotistical and dreamy adolescent fantasies, but rather "a friend who offers truth, who demands truth." There were, in the nineteenth century as at other times, wishes and fears so exciting or so frightening that one could not acknowledge them even to oneself, and they reached consciousness only by the detour of dreams or slips of the tongue. There were other confidential matters that could be breathed to a single intimate alone—a favorite sister, a dependable school friend, and, later, a loving spouse. The diary and the journal could stand in for several of these confidants at once. They were discreet, patient, always receptive, and never carping.

There were moments when secret autobiographers did not quite trust their silent friend—or themselves—enough to admit their sexual misdeeds in their own language; diarists from Pepys to Gladstone would employ foreign phrases to record peccadillos they could scarcely bring themselves to utter, or think about. But, whatever residual reserve such recourse to another language might disclose, the diarist normally preferred his diary to the closest of his friends. Henri Frédéric Amiel, whose enormous, subtle, self-explanatory, and self-tormenting diary was to make him famous posthumously, in 1864 called his diary "my conversation, my society, my companion, my confidant." It was "my consolation, my memory, the bearer of my burdens, my echo, the reservoir of my inner experiences, my psychological itinerary, my protection against the mildew of the mind, my excuse for living, almost the only useful thing I can leave behind." Two years after his death in 1881, a stringently abbreviated and thoughtfully expurgated edition of his consolation, echo, and itinerary was published, first in French and then in an English translation by the novelist Mrs. Humphry Ward; a popular success that would have astonished Amiel, who had written for himself, to create a listener to whom he could confess everything. In 1876, a few years before his death put an end to his luxuriating and informal autobiography, he clarified the place of his diary in his life once again: "My *journal takes the place of the confidant, that is* to say of friend and wife." For Amiel at least, as we know, it did.

In the manner of diary writers, Amiel often addressed his journal as though it were a partner in conversation. "I have deserted you for a long time, my poor journal," he noted in 1839. And again, in the following year, using almost exactly the same formulation as little Edward Root: "Poor journal! It has been a long time since I have kept you." And he was prompt to blame himself: "I am always the same, forgetful and thoughtless." Apologies of this sort were exceedingly common. "I have neglected my friend, the diary, for more than two months," Otto von Leixner, still a student, noted in June 1867. Yet he found that in confessing to his friend how miserable he had been at a dance, he found extraordinary relief: "It was wonderful—now I feel at least a little easier after I have shared my feelings with my diary." He could have shared them, it would seem, with no one else.

In this atmosphere of shared solitude, diaries became the targets of affection, sometimes of downright sensual infatuation. The famous Russian diarist Marie Bashkirtseff, talented, ambitious, willful, doomed by consumption to die young, lived in, and for, her journal. "My diary!" she exclaimed. "It is half of myself." As she noted a little self-consciously, aware that she would not live long, it was also her legacy to posterity: "The idea that my diary will not be interesting . . . torments me." No less anguished, the Swedish novelist Victoria Benedictsson would open her cherished "Big Book" to pour out her longings for freedom and love: "Dear old book," she called it. Spirits less tempestuous

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than these could still treat their diaries with real emotion, load them with the kind of affect one usually reserves for real persons: "So little book, goodbye," Mabel Todd concluded her European journal of 1885. "You have been a help & pleasure to me, & a sympathetic though silent friend." In much the same terms, Lady Knightley recalled in a late autobiographical sketch that on her fourteenth birthday, April 25, 1856, "I began to write the Journal which has been my faithful companion ever since." This was more than conventional rhetoric; it discloses an active emotional investment in these sympathetic and silent friends to whom one could entrust pent-up feelings and unrealized wishes.

This innocent but meaningful anthropomorphism finds charming expression in the journals that the precocious Karen Horney started in 1899. "How I come to be writing a diary," she began, "is easy to explain." She was then thirteen. "It's because I am enthusiastic about everything new and now also have the will to carry this through so that in later years I can remember better the days of my youth." They were, as one might expect, days of rash puppy love and quick disappointments, both reported with a sense of trusting intimacy. "To you, my diary," she wrote, "I will confide that I have sent Herr Schulze," an adored teacher, then sick in bed, "6 bottles of wine." Yet only a month later she dismissed her companion with little sentimentality: "Farewell, my diary, there is no room left for you in my trunk." But her infidelity was, as Horney's later diaries show, strictly temporary. In 1901, when she was fifteen, she called the diary she was then keeping "pussy" or "kitten," as she might a school friend on whom she had a crush. And she was, like so many others, contrite when she neglected her kitten: "I had often taken pen in hand to pour out my heart to you, my dear diary, but I never found quiet and time enough." Activity and diary writing were normally adversaries.

Fortunately for the historian, activity was, in the nineteenth century, rarely engrossing enough to break the habit of diary keeping entirely. That habit was, after all, symptomatic for bourgeois styles of thinking: it was orderly, though providing space for freedom and individuality, and self-critical, yet open to effusions of hope and self-esteem. Thus it exemplifies the great bourgeois compromise, sometimes pathetic yet often creditable, between the need for reserve and the capacity for emotion. And it exhibits the bourgeoisie's little-regarded gift not merely for experiencing but also for recording erotic excitement. The diary was the resource of the lonely; it was often abandoned upon marriage. It could take the place, as Amiel had said, of friend and wife. Yet greater diarists treated their diaries and journals not as substitutes for sexual activity or as rivals to their lovers but as their loyal companions. William Ewart Gladstone kept his diary all through his life, making daily entries in the midst of busy domestic occupations and the most active career any English politician has known. Lester Ward's French journal, to which he confided his most intimate sexual activities, survived into marriage. Mabel Loomis Todd returned to her lyrical and informative journal often and made faithful entries in her diary, both before and during her marriage. Many journal writers, indeed, found marriage an incentive to more eloquent self-revelations rather than an inducement to stop: the precise place of the diary in the middle-class experience of privacy naturally varied from individual to individual. But together, these records serve to define the boundaries, flexible as they were, between disclosure and reticence in the bourgeois century. Middle-class reserve has lent some support to the suspicion that the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie mounted a conspiracy of silence. But there was no conspiracy and, as the diaries prove, no silence. There *was* circumspection, especially about the things that mattered.

What mattered most were issues circling around Eros—sexuality, love, the body, health—and these were off limits to all unauthorized persons. And good bourgeois, princes of prudence, were inclined to define unauthorized persons as almost everyone other than the loving couple or practically merged siblings. Letters in many languages, mercifully preserved, bear the earnest request that they be kept "Private & Confidential," or, sometimes, destroyed: "Don't read this aloud & burn it up." Perceptions of true propriety lay along a wide spectrum, but the rule that some topics were too delicate, some feelings too sacrosanct for discussion, perhaps even within the family, was fairly strictly observed among the proper. "Dear Sophie," Mrs. Pea-

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body wrote to her daughter, whom she missed greatly, shortly after Sophia Peabody had become Mrs. Nathaniel Hawthorne, "I could fill sheets with what my heart is full of, on several subjects; but I am more and more convinced that this world is not the place to pour out the soul without reserve." Certain personal matters were, almost literally, holy, endowed with all the ambiguous and shadowy power of the taboo. Responding to a love letter from his fiancée, Nathaniel Hawthorne told her that, upon receiving it, he had put it into his pocket, "for I always feel as if your letters were too sacred to read in the midst of people—and (you will smile) I never read them without first washing my hands!" His acknowledgment that she might smile at his cleansing ritual unintentionally suggests how problematic sexuality had become in Hawthorne's time. It was problematic, and it was private: "How strange, that such a flower as our affection should have blossomed amid snow and wintry winds—accompaniments which no poet or novelist, that I know of, has ever introduced into a love-tale. Nothing like our story was ever written—or ever will be," Hawthorne told Sophia Peabody a little later, "for we shall not feel inclined to make the public our confidant; but if it could be told, methinks it would be such as the angels would take delight to hear."

This was a characteristic stance for lovers to adopt in the nineteenth-century middle classes: they did not deny—on the contrary they cherished—potent emotions, but these were no outsider's affair. Emily Dickinson, recluse and seer, condensed this social—perhaps, better: anti-social—style with unmatched economy:

> Tell all the Truth but tell it slant,
> Success in Circuit lies

The conflicts generated by middle-class definitions of propriety were exacerbated by banal but often ferocious boundary disputes about the standards appropriate to men and women. There was little question that the female, the gentle sex, must carry reserve further than the male, but how much further was not always clear. In the spring of 1870, the young social scientist William Graham Sumner, then a promising clergyman, began to woo Jeannie Elliott and promptly confessed his appetite for her presence. "Give me at least a crumb of a letter before long," he wrote her on May 5. "I am modest in my demands but I am very hungry." Modest as he was, he insisted on his right to correspond, and be in touch, with her. But it was at this point that frontier skirmishes became almost inevitable. "Your mother, at Guilford," Sumner wrote Jeannie on May 12, "was quite conservative. She said you might receive my attentions 'up to a certain point.' What point? I did not ask her to define." Yet he told his Jeannie that he would have protested against any restrictions on seeing her.

This hurdle taken, a far more formidable one, her propriety, barred his way to consummation. Something of an amateur psychologist, Sumner wanted Jeannie Elliott to develop into an independent personage in her own right and open herself to passionate love at her own pace. For more than a year, practically to the day of their marriage, he pressed her, gently, to dismantle the walls of her reserve. She told him in all candor that it would not be easy. "I am not demonstrative, I never have been." Yet she hoped to be "a sensible and true woman, even old fashioned to some extent." He professed to understand. "I know all this new feeling must disturb you very much," he wrote her in mid-May 1870. "You are undemonstrative as we have agreed. I saw by your letter yesterday that you had got so far as to feel that you ought to be and wanted to be demonstrative." Then he sought to allay her anxieties about her anxiety. "No woman ever loved a man without having to go through that fear"—the fear of not loving passionately enough. Yet Sumner was torn, urgent behind his veneer of self-control. Jeannie had told him that she was dissatisfied with being unable to "give" him more than she did. "Is your heart waking up, Jeannie," he asked her, "and fighting agst. your reserved disposition, and those life-long habits of 'propriety' wh. I talked to you about?" In placing "propriety" between quotation marks he put her defensive habits into question, and he implored her to see that "the time has come for your reserve to break down at least with one"—with him. He attempted to coax her into erotic freedom by resorting to socially acceptable religious language as a cloak for his amorous desires. He could have been "exacting" with her, he told her a little omi-

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nously, but had chosen instead to be content with the relatively meager proofs of love she had so far given him. They were enough for him: "I treasure them all the world besides. Some of them are so holy that I can scarcely mention them even to you." Meanwhile she pleaded with him: "Be patient with me." And he was, after his fashion. He had observed, and after a time professed to have deciphered, a certain puzzling gesture of hers: it "seemed to me to express just this very perplexity. You used it just after I had said something very tender and affectionate and I guessed that it meant just this doubt or fear."

Sumner's hunger only persisted and grew. "I am afraid that I am insatiable," he wrote on May 23; while, once again, he reassured her that men are ahead of women in erotic impetuosity, he predicted—it was a wish translated into a hypnotic forecast—"you will be swept away at last. . . . You will abandon all your proud reserve." By May 26, obsessively returning to his theme, he was ready to denigrate the respectable defenses taught to gently raised nineteenth-century young women: "When the time comes when your heart prompts you, you will not hold back from any false pride, or false reserve, or false propriety." Much as he protested that he understood and sympathized—he had even, he told her, "pumped" his friends, who all agreed that "during their engagements they found the ladies troubled in just this way"—her coldness was obviously becoming a trial to him. "I want you so much all the time," he told Jeannie Elliott, and while he meant only to say that he missed seeing her, bolder, more pointed longings reverberate in his pathetic declaration. In his frustration, he resorted to that tired cliché about the mysterious female sex. "Woman's heart," he wrote, is an "enigma." And he asked helplessly, "Does it always thus vibrate between hope and fear—peace and anxiety?" He had held her in his arms, but largely, it seems, to reassure and comfort her. The rest had to wait.

And the rest came, though very imperfect in its enactments. Once married, Jeannie Sumner, perpetuating and intensifying her virginal unresponsiveness, developed debilitating nervous ailments, resorted to drugs, fled to health spas. Her husband remained as fond, as sensually aggressive, as she would let him be, but she deftly defended herself with her illnesses and her bouts of nervous exhaustion. Yet, for all such troubled unions, for all the conspicuous, at times tragic victims of erotic mismatching, the middle classes cultivated their passions.

They often did so maladroitly. Sentimentality disfigured a good deal of published poetry, moralizing tracts, and affectionate correspondence. So did the common defense against it, a kind of embarrassed reticence. Such extremes, though frequent and habitual, did not go unremarked or uncriticized, and became subject to perceptive comment—by the perceptive. Not long before their marriage, Nathaniel Hawthorne described to Sophia Peabody what he called, significantly, the "strange reserve, in regard to matters of feelings," that prevailed in his family; his characterization leaves no doubt that he could imagine a reserve less strange, which is to say, less censorious: "We are conscious of one another's feelings, always; but there seems to be a tacit law, that our deepest heart-concernments are not to be spoken of. I cannot gush out in their presence—I cannot take my heart in my hand, and show it to them. There is a feeling within me (though I know it is a foolish one) as if it would be as indecorous to do so, as to display to them the naked breast." This sort of reserve dominated many persons in many conditions: "My father," Alexander Herzen recalled, "disliked every sort of *abandon*, every sort of frankness; all this he called familiarity, just he as called every feeling sentimentality." Hawthorne and Herzen testify to the vitality of feelings in the bourgeois century, even if some could not help repressing them.

It was precisely in defense of these feelings that social commentators ridiculed the purists and the pedants who would put carnal knowledge, like carnal excitement, on short rations. In 1891 *Punch*, scarcely hospitable to advanced moral postures, showed a "Young Bride of Three Hours' Standing (just starting on her wedding Trip)," at a station bookstall, pointing with her gloved hand to a book, and exclaiming to her husband: "Oh, Edwin Dear! Here's *Tom Jones*. Papa told me I wasn't to read it till I was married! The day has come . . . at last! Buy it for me, Edwin dear." There is a certain poignancy in a married woman asking her husband to buy her a book instead of buying it herself, but the critical point of

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the cartoon is the absurdity of withholding a classic from a respectable young woman. Even William Ewart Gladstone, for decades a pillar of the English religious and political establishments, decided that the passion for privacy had gone too far. Reading the long biography of George Eliot that her husband J. W. Cross had just published, Gladstone complained that "it is not a life at all. It is a Reticence, in three volumes." When a Gladstone could lament the excesses of reticence, we may be sure that it had exceeded the bounds of rational self-defense.

While lapses into excessive delicacy were common and sometimes ludicrous, their meaning remains hard to read. Once again I turn to the Hawthornes for light. Nathaniel and Sophia Hawthorne's marriage was an ecstatic union of two kindred spirits, as gratifying physically as it was mentally. Sophia Peabody, a highly educated, painfully sensitive young woman, suffering grievously from an assortment of psychosomatic symptoms, found her condition improving upon her engagement; after the wedding her symptoms largely faded away. Once engaged to be married, she could evidently permit herself and her fiancé erotic liberties, apparently short only of intercourse itself. He could write her excited letters and she could respond almost, if not quite, in kind. "Oh, my dearest," he wrote to her, decently draping his sexual arousal in a few adroit displacements, "I yearn for you, and my heart heaves when I think of you . . . heaves and swells (my heart does) as sometimes you have felt it beneath you, when your head, or your bosom, was resting on it. At such moments it is stirred up from its depths. Then our two ocean-hearts mingle their floods." Sophia Peabody did not object to such prose and replied in tones no calmer than his. She wrote him that she had had a nightmarish dream, in which he had addressed her, in a letter, as "My dear sister," a dream that made him anxious, but no more so than it made her. His erotic imagination was kindled by the frustrations that the bourgeois rules of the courting game inflicted on him, but he did not hesitate to tell her so: "Dove, come to my bosom—it yearns for you as it never did before. I shall fold my arms together, after I am in bed, and try to imagine that you are close to my heart. Naughty wife, what right have you to be anywhere else? How many sweet words I should breathe into your ear in the quiet night—how many holy kisses would I press upon your lips." They were holy, of course, but they were kisses; and Hawthorne translated his wishes into fancied reality by calling his fiancée his wife: "Sophia Hawthorne"; elsewhere, during their engagement, he referred to one of their embraces as "conjugal." And he told her: "I have a most human and earthly appetite." He was speaking of supper, but he had more exciting food than this on his mind. After a while, he no longer took the trouble to disguise his impatience for consummation. "We have left expression—at least such expression as can be achieved with pen and ink—far behind us." For that matter, "even the spoken word has long been inadequate. Looks—pressures of the lips and hands—the touch of bosom to bosom—these are a better language; but bye-and-bye, our spirits will demand some more adequate expression even than these." There could be no obscurity in his mind as to what he meant, or in hers, for that matter.

Marriage, in fact, provided the more adequate expression of love that both had so long desired. They slept wrapped in one another—"I left my Sophie's arms at five o'clock this morning," he noted in his diary, in an entry that his vigilant widow allowed to stand—and Sophia Hawthorne did not lag behind her husband in erotic satisfaction. She noted in her husband's diary—to which she often contributed in the early years—that it is the "inward thought alone" which makes the body "either material or angelical." And quoting the sacred text, she elaborated: " 'Are ye not the temple of the living GOD?' says the apostle. Ah, yes—also I suppose some persons are the den of the archfiend, through such has this miraculous form come into disrepute. Before our marriage I knew nothing of its capacities, & the truly married alone can know what a wondrous instrument it is for the purposes of the heart." She was severe with those who had married for "convenience or whim"; certainly, "the profane never can taste the joys of Elysium—because it is a spiritual joy, so they cannot percieve [*sic*] it." The miraculous form, the wondrous instrument for the purposes of the heart, the joys of Elysium, whose true possibilities marriage alone can reveal, was lawful and affectionate sexual intercourse.

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And yet, when, shortly after Hawthorne's death in 1864, his publisher asked his widow to prepare his diaries for publication, she censored her husband's and her own prose with a ready pen blotting out words, and an equally ready pair of scissors cutting out whole passages. Nudity, even that of their children, was too vulgar to survive her alert eye; some of her late husband's more pungent expressions, like "whore" or "pimp," or his occasional indulgence in tobacco and liquor did not pass her rigorous scrutiny. She was, of course, quite as severe, perhaps even more severe, with her own prose: she mutilated her little paean to sexual congress as though it had been a shameful aberration. But her erotic enjoyment appears to have been persistent and relatively unalloyed; if her health remained uncertain, her headaches at least disappeared. And something, perhaps the memory of past felicities, stayed her scissors and allowed at least hints of her gratifications to survive, though not to be published.

And that, of course, is the point—that treasured, almost miraculous encounter, happy marital sexual intercourse suffused with tenderness, was the business of the lovers alone. Its very mystery, often taken as a symptom of the shame with which prudish bourgeois approached the marriage bed, was something of a tribute to their high regard for loving, erotic pleasures. This much should now be plain: the bourgeois experience was far richer than its expression, rich as that was; and it included a substantial measure of sensuality for both sexes, and of candor—in sheltered surroundings. It would be a gross misreading of this experience to think that nineteenth-century bourgeois did not know, or did not practice, or did not enjoy, what they did not discuss.

The share of enduring affection in erotic enjoyment was obvious but repays emphasis. Good, sober nineteenth-century bourgeois did not treat the conjunction between what Freud called the two currents of love as an empty protestation or a remote ideal. "O sweet love for a worthy object," the German historian of Judaism, Heinrich Graetz, exclaimed in his revealing youthful journal, "how heavenly are your joys, which raise us above low passions." The formulation is a little bombastic, but it was sincerely felt and far from untypical for his class and his time.

Bourgeois reserve, then, modesty, reticence, propriety, to say nothing of prudishness and hypocrisy, gave the middle classes time and space for organizing and reorganizing their responses to a world in flux. Together, these devices amounted to a panoply of defensive tactics that enclosed a privileged space for exciting and unsettling experiences. These devices, at once personal and cultural, kept sensuality alive but out of sight, the mermaid's tail (as Charlotte Brontë had said about Thackeray's writings) below water. And out of sight did not mean out of mind. Private life became the hidden lair in which men and women bound up their wounds, recouped their forces, and acted out their passions with manageable risks.

These reflections fit the bourgeois education of the senses into a larger framework, that of the individual's place in nineteenth-century middle-class culture. In 1893, quoting an unnamed English writer, Sigmund Freud proposed that the man who first threw an epithet at his enemy instead of a spear was the founder of civilization. By the age of Victoria, especially among the middling orders, the capacity for self-control and sublimation had been very highly developed. The pressures of technology, the anxieties of physicians, the risks of pregnancy, the passion for privacy, not to forget man's fear of woman—all touched on the ways in which nineteenth-century bourgeois organized their lives in a tumultuous time. The specter of the lower orders in revolt embodied in the French Revolution of 1789 and periodically revived in later upheavals across Europe was only the most spectacular, most widely discussed ground for middle-class anxiety. Bourgeois fears of discontented peasants and workers were wholly conscious, out in the open. Other anxieties were less visible, at least partly unconscious. But they were no less potent for that; in the midst of material progress and political successes, the middle classes were apprehensive over social status, moral imperatives, religious traditions, familial conflicts, and, encapsulating them all, cultural change. The great panics over masturbation and similar private and public evils were florid symptoms of these troubling concerns. And they induced the bourgeoisie to deploy some new defenses or elaborate old ones. The bourgeois gave new urgency to the study of love and rehearsed in their fiction the

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dimensions of love both permissible and forbidden; they devised stratagems giving sensuality respectable credentials and discovered the threat of unorthodox sexual tastes. And they worried over nervousness, which they took to be the archetypal modern ailment, the malaise they deserved.

We may use the bourgeois century, then, as a most severe test of Freud's theories of culture. He argued, as we know, that institutions, whether of society or of the mind, at once control human passions and satisfy human needs. Man cannot live without these institutions, but he cannot live with them in complete, childlike serenity. That is why the constraints they impose are at once indispensable and unpopular. At their best, such constraints will act not to frustrate but to foster personal gratifications. But the best is, of course, very rare, even among well-placed bourgeois.

Precisely because its opportunities were without precedent, the flaws of bourgeois culture were most sensitively probed and most noisily resented. And not all its experiments fencing in sensuality were successful; Freud was not alone in reading his culture as one in which inhibitions on sexual conduct had gone far beyond the necessary. But such maladjustments should have surprised no one. The age, after all, called for largely untried responses to establish, or to readjust, the relative shares of freedom and obligation and to regulate anew the relations between man's fundamental, often clashing drives. But there was good cause for optimism, often poignantly disappointed but often cheerfully realized, reason to hope that savagery might be tamed by civilizing Eros, "sensuous force," as George Eliot put it, "controlled by spiritual passion," lust mastered by love.

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FDR as a Biographer's Problem

KENNETH S. DAVIS

When, more years ago than I like to count, a publisher approached me with the proposal that I do a book about Franklin Delano Roosevelt, only the accompanying offer of what was for those days a quite large advance against royalties was tempting to me. It was a temptation I resisted. The flood of Rooseveltiana already in print, including several established classics, was overwhelming; I saw no need to add to it. The risks and difficulties of the proposed project were formidable. There was the danger, for instance, of becoming bogged down in interminable research (it crushed my spirit to learn that there were forty-five tons of documents in the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park). Finally, conclusively, as I thought at the time, FDR, though I'd read with much interest a great many books about him and his administration, was devoid of interest to me as a writing subject of my own.

Earlier I had dealt with three very different biographical subjects. With each of these I had felt a considerable measure of personal rapport.

Long ago I did a biography of Dwight Eisenhower. I liked him personally when I was in contact with him in England and France. I understood his background, for I was a friend and colleague of his brother Milton, who was then president of Kansas State University, and I had been born and raised just forty miles or so from Ike's hometown of Abilene. It was only after he became president that I found it possible to dislike Ike—and my book about him was completed some years before he (mistakenly, I think) entered politics.

Adlai Stevenson, with whom I also had personal contact and of whom I wrote my second biography, I actually loved as a human being. He had great sweetness and warmth and wit, and it seemed to me we had many of the same priorities, the same basic values, the same unfashionable view of history as essentially a moral drama. I often felt, when I was writing about him, that I understood Stevenson from the inside out, better than most who were much more intimately associated with him; and though he'd not be likely to say so to anyone else (with the possible exception of his sister Buffie), he gave me oral and documentary reason to believe *he* thought I understood him too.

I never met Charles Lindbergh. It wasn't necessary for the kind of book I wrote about him, whose essential subject was heroism and hero worship in twentieth century America. But with Lindbergh, too, I had a certain empathy. His small-town midwestern background had similarities to my own; he was half-Swedish, as I am; I share some of the "gloomy Swede" withdrawal tendencies that were his and his father's; I could understand his kind of courage, a precisely calculated risk taking, a cold-nerved willingness to bet one's life on an estimate of odds; and I could certainly empathize with his profound aversion to the incredible mass adulation of which he became the victim.

Toward Franklin Roosevelt, however, I had initially no personal sympathetic attraction: indeed, as a biographical subject, and quite apart from the bristling difficulties he presented in that aspect, he repelled me.

How and why was this so?

For one thing—despite all I'd read of his warm heart and concern for the welfare of common folk, and despite the impression he

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conveyed of these things when he talked on the radio or appeared in newsreels—I could never quite have for him a genuinely *human* feeling. He was to me more a symbolic movement than a person, and a movement about whose meaning and direction I had frequent grave doubts. I cast my first presidential ballot for him. My first professional employment was a lowly post in a New Deal agency, from which vantage point he often appeared a radiant godlike figure who was not only America's saviour from the glooms and despairs of the Great Depression but my own personal saviour as well. On many an occasion he also appeared the one indispensable barrier to a flood of reaction into some form of American fascism, and for that reason I was forever defending him in argument, always vehement and often acrimonious, with my otherwise beloved father and with other Roosevelt-hating Republicans. Awesome was his manifest genius (evidently a unique blend of intuition, calculation, confidence, charm, and personal force) for locating, seizing, then actively holding the focal points of countervailing political power, a genius whereby he achieved and maintained through a dozen years of crisis a decisive centrality in the historical process of America, of the world as a whole. He was central to everything! Wherever he was seemed the capital of the universe simply because he was there! But by all this I was not encouraged to believe I had any understanding of, or could ever empathetically understand, Franklin Roosevelt as a living, breathing, feeling, thinking man. He was in all respects remote. His background as a member of the Hudson River aristocracy, his Groton-Harvard schooling, his polio crippling, his subsequent and consequent environmental experience, these were all so alien to anything I myself had experienced that I might never be able to depict them accurately, however hard I tried, much less comprehend and accurately describe their shaping influence on him. As for his basic motives, his ultimate aims, his actual feeling about himself and the world, his sense of reality—these things, I was sure, lay forever beyond my ken.

Nor were these the sum—they were not even the most important—of my initial objections to the publisher's proposal.

Just suppose I was mistaken about the impossibility of my ever finding and depicting the *real* Roosevelt. Suppose, after the arduous search that would evidently be required, I did find him. Would he prove to be a man in whose company I could live comfortably through the years required for a serious biography of him? I doubted it. About the FDR whom I observed across a vast social distance, but with a close attention, all through the years of my young manhood—about the FDR who later emerged for me out of the published works of people who had had contact with him—there was a great deal that was to me personally antipathetic. I happen to be an idealist in philosophy (my great teacher was Alexander Meiklejohn): I'm convinced that ideas are determinants of history and that long-term consistency, not immediate practical efficacy, is the test of the truth of ideas. With pragmatism and pragmatists, therefore, I have little imaginative sympathy—and FDR in action seemed almost wholly, purely pragmatic. He who was only too aware of the separateness of things had apparently little or no awareness of the connections and connectedness whereby organization (organismic wholeness) is created. His concern for consistency, if any, appeared minimal, which meant from my point of view that his concern for truth, for truthfulness, must also be nonexistent or minimal. And such a conclusion seemed justified by a good deal of evidence. Out of what I observed and read about him there emanated, along with a wonderfully animating life-affirming radiance, a faint (sometimes not so faint) odor of the sly, the slippery, the excessively clever.

Consider the published testimony: "Franklin Roosevelt was not a simple man," writes Frances Perkins. "That quality of simplicity which we delight to think [which I myself *do* think] marks the great and noble was not his. He was the most complicated human being I ever knew." Walter Lippmann, disgusted by the "intricate game" that FDR as New York governor and presidential candidate "elected . . . to play . . . with Tammany," suggested on several occasions that the "complicatedness" descried by Perkins was not unrelated to the arts and morality of an opportunistic confidence man. "The trouble with Franklin D. Roosevelt is that his mind is not very clear, his purposes are not simple, and his methods are not direct," concluded a famous Lippmann column. "A clear-headed, simple and direct

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man would not have landed himself in the confusion [Lippmann elsewhere calls it a "squalid mess"] which now prevails between Albany and City Hall." Much of the poignancy of Eleanor Roosevelt's memoirs derives from her expressed yearning to reach out and touch the essential self of the man she had married; her second volume aches with the frustration of her effort to reach him—a frustration leading to the bleak conclusion, after he had died, that she had been merely one of those whom he found "useful." Roosevelt "loved secrecy," writes Sam Rosenman, yet he "was often the one guilty of letting facts get out about which he had sworn others to secrecy." And both Rosenman and Ray Moley, also Rex Tugwell and Jim Farley, record instances of Rooseveltian mendacity, often employed merely to embellish a good story but sometimes with regard to major issues, and of his preference for the devious over the frankly straightforward, even on occasions (notably at the outset of his 1937 Supreme Court battle) when plain speaking and dealing would have far better served his ends.

At the very time I was considering the publisher's offer, Rosenman and James MacGregor Burns suffered acute public embarrassment for having accepted at face value FDR's claim (found in a memorandum in the Roosevelt Library) to have composed the first draft of his first inaugural address between the hours of 9:00 P.M. and 1:30 A.M., at Hyde Park, on the night of February 27, 1933. Moley's just-published *First New Deal* made scornful comment upon Rosenman's failure to check with him the account, in Rosenman's *Working with Roosevelt*, of the inaugural's making, since Rosenman well knew that Moley was at that time involved in the preparation of every Roosevelt speech. And Moley proved up to the hilt, with incontrovertible documentary evidence, that he himself wrote the first draft, which meant that not a word was true of Burns's vividly circumstantial story of this drafting, in *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*—a book I continue greatly to admire. Moreover, reading *The First New Deal*, I could not but conclude that FDR's copying in his own hand of Moley's typed draft, in Moley's presence, on the night of February 27, was probably done with deliberate *intent* to deceive posterity. Obviously any historian ran grave risks who accepted as literally true, without further checking, anything FDR said about his own experience. The most primary source of information, in the case of FDR, was by that very token the most suspect.

Consistent with this was the fact that it was FDR who introduced the Big Smile to presidential politics, where it has since stuck (note the difference of standard facial expressions of photographed presidential politicians before and after 1932) and who institutionalized ghostwriting in presidential politics (Hoover, Coolidge, Harding, Wilson, and the presidents before them wrote most or all of their own speeches), thereby increasing the difficulty of knowing for whom or what one is voting in the polling booth.

In the face of all this, I'm reasonably sure I would never have signed that publishing contract had the idea not occurred to me, one day, of giving the proposed project a working title of "Franklin D. Roosevelt: A History" rather than "Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Biography" and then assigning to "history" the same weight I gave "Roosevelt" in my overall conception.

Every biographical work is of necessity, to greater or less degree, a "life-and-times." In most biographies, however, even those written about major political figures whose lives are absorbed in public affairs, the "times" are presented as a background or temporal setting for the "life." Insofar as history moves through such books, it is only as changing circumstance, which is to say that it remains essentially passive and static, environmental, scenic in the stage-metaphorical sense. But must the proposed work, if I agreed to do it, be done in this usual way? I saw no iron necessity. Instead of dealing with history as mere occasion or necessary condition for a story of Roosevelt's life, why not make it the very substance of the book—make *it* the story, having FDR as the central character or hero? This opened exciting possibilities. I might be enabled, if I chose, to shape a kind of "nonfiction novel" (Capote's phrase was not then overused), which, though scrupulously accurate in every biographical-historical detail, made use of a novelist's sense of drama, a novelist's feeling for character and place, a novelist's narrative and descriptive techniques. My aim and attempt could be to

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achieve an actual fusion of history and person in a single flowing process—a process, moreover, having a clear central theme, so that it became the development of a basic pattern of significance, or the working out of a definite program of meaning. Just possibly (against painful hazard one drugs oneself with impossible dreams) a work of art might be created having a Tolstoyan sweep and force—a work of necessarily vast scope, with great crowds of people and events, yet with the tightness, the essential unity of a short story.

And what would be the unifying theme? It must of course be no grand a priori concept arbitrarily imposed upon objectively existent data; it must instead logically derive from these data. But in point of fact I found it already derived in my mind as part and parcel of a long-perceived central theme of Western history—found it there as a general thematic conclusion that must be (has been) reached, I suppose, by every mind that has tried seriously to understand what has been *basically* happening in Western civilization since the Renaissance.

For obviously the most basic causal force operating in Western, and thence world, history, from the early seventeenth century till today, has been the accelerating advance of science and technology and its increasingly strong impact on social, cultural, economic, and political institutions and on the lives of individual men and women. Every major decisive historical event of the last two centuries has had at its heart the dynamic relationship (that of challenge and response) between man's personal and institutional life on the one hand and the growing power of his technology on the other. But since the latter has increasingly become the prime mover of the whole process, the question arises as to whether man's technology is truly his in the sense of ownership and control. Does he possess it, control it—or does it possess and control him? The question was no by means wholly fanciful when Mary Shelley published her *Frankenstein*. It had become wholly realistic by the time Henry Adams published his *Education*. And it was one of Adams's striking metaphors that set me thinking about all this, that day, in terms of FDR. Adams tells how, in November 1904, sailing up New York harbor at the end of a crossing from Cherbourg, he saw the "outline of the city" as "frantic." It was as if "power . . . [had] outgrown its servitude" and "asserted its freedom." It was as if "the cylinder had exploded, and thrown great masses of stone and steam against the sky." And when Adams had debarked and was again upon the streets of New York, the city seemed to him to have "the air and movement of hysteria"; its citizens "were crying, with every accent of anger and alarm, that the new forces must at any cost be brought under control."

But they were not brought under control. Instead, they continued to grow out of control, distorted into monstrous shapes by the political and economic arrangements of a preindustrial age. They imposed intolerable strains on social walls and vastly overflowed economic channels that had never been designed to contain them. They created global interdependencies that were increasingly frustrated by the prevailing system (or anarchy) of national sovereignties. Blind responses to them increasingly submerged individual lives and liberties in vast collectives, essentially mindless in their direction—giant organizations of which the nominal administrator was more puppet than master and in which human lives and purposes were more and more subordinate to the machine's laws of operation, the machine's convenience. In sum, a gap was opened and widened between power and intelligence (out of it came World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, the atom bomb) as the former advanced by leaps and bounds while the latter, whose firm grasp alone could make technology the servant of humane ends, limped farther and farther behind.

Here, then, was my central unifying theme. The struggle to close the power-intelligence gap, which was a struggle for emergence of a new kind of American community out of individualistic chaos and of at least minimal world government out of international anarchy, was for me the essential dramatic conflict, the plot, of the story having FDR as central character. By this perceived story line I would be provided with a selective principle (one was absolutely necessary) for choice and emphasis among the myriad items and possibilities anyone must consider who writes of Roosevelt and his years.

There remained the problem of FDR himself—that multifaceted, mercurial, enigmatic

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man. How was I ever to penetrate his thick and evidently swiftly changing disguises to reach any understanding of his essential being—of his basic attitudes and motives? I'd have to do that if I were to present him as other than a symbolic person or cardboard figure, all brilliant smiling surface. And I remember that, on the day of my final decision to sign the publishing contract, I made a list of published facts and surmises about him out of which I might possibly draw clues to a solution of this problem, clues possibly pointing the way toward a valid theory of personality.

Thus:

FDR was the only child of highly privileged parents, and his formidable mother, in a strange little book entitled *My Boy Franklin*, reports that he as a child, playing with other children, was always the one who gave orders. When she remonstrated with him one day, saying he should let others run things sometimes, he replied, "Mummie, if I didn't give the orders, nothing would happen!" And, surprisingly, significantly, his playmates seemed not often to resent his bossiness; they generally obeyed with willing alacrity. His mother also tells of the day when he came up to the Hyde Park house from woods along the river, which is quite a long walk uphill, to get his collector's gun. He'd seen a winter wren in "one of the big trees down there" and wanted it for his bird collection. She laughed at him. Surely he didn't expect that wren to sit there waiting for his return! "Oh, yes," he replied confidently, "he'll wait." The dead bird was in his hand when he came back to the house sometime later.

He was from early boyhood an inveterate collector, not just of birds but of stamps (this became his major lifelong hobby), naval prints, historical documents, and rare books (he specialized in Americana). He lived amid a clutter of ship models, figurines, and mementos of all kinds.

He was mildly but genuinely superstitious. He was superstitious about the number thirteen and would go to considerable trouble to avoid eating at a table of thirteen or beginning a journey on the thirteenth day of a month. "Occasionally this meant pulling a train out at 11:50 P.M. on the twelfth or 12:10 A.M. on the fourteenth," writes Grace Tully, who also reports that "one of the few occasions I know of when the President actually reprimanded someone brusquely in public involved the superstition of lighting three cigarettes on a match." On the evening when he waited at Hyde Park for a phone call from Chicago that would tell him whether or not he would win presidential nomination on the fourth ballot of the 1932 Democratic convention, he had the dining table moved so that the telephone cord would reach him at his accustomed place at the table's head, though it would have been less trouble for him to move to a side of the table that the cord would easily reach: to change chairs at table would be bad luck. He became addicted to certain articles of clothing as lucky—an old felt hat, an old sweater—and averse to others as unlucky.

He was notably ear-minded rather than eye-minded; he learned by listening, not by reading. Ed Flynn, who was as intimate an associate of his between 1928 and 1945 as any man, with the exception of Louis Howe and Harry Hopkins, writes that he "never saw him read a book" or even "read a magazine unless a particular portion was called to his attention." Moley, Tugwell, and many others who were for periods close to him testify that he seldom, if ever, read a serious book all the way through during the time they were associated with him. At Harvard, where his academic record was undistinguished, all his classes were in history, political science (only thoroughly orthodox economic theory was taught to him), and English, save for single courses in geology, general paleontology, Latin literature, and French literature. He had no exposure to mathematics, physics, chemistry, or philosophy (the philosophy faculty at Harvard, with James and Santayana as members, was exceptionally brilliant during his undergraduate years). He did enroll in a general introduction to philosophy, taught by Josiah Royce, but dropped it after three weeks. At the close of his last college year he complained to his roommate that his Harvard studies had been "like an electric light that hasn't any wire. You need the lamp for light but it's useless if you can't switch it on."

He was fond of gambling, but for small stakes. He played poker with more enthusiasm than skill, losing more than he won. He bet impulsively, was overinclined to bluff and, when dealer, was likely to raise howls of protest around the table by calling a game in

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which so many cards were wild that no one could estimate the odds. His business speculations during the 1920s were of the same "wild card" variety. He was attracted to the novel, the daring, and though he seldom invested much in any one such venture, he lost most or all of what he did put in when, as almost always happened, the venture quickly failed. Yet in elective politics, though he often seemed daring to the point of recklessness, he was, in reality and in general, shrewd and cautious. It is true that his very first campaign (for the New York legislature in 1910), his immediately following legislative battle over "Blue-eyed Billy" Sheehan, and his 1914 primary bid for the United States Senate were all extremely hazardous ventures. The latter was actually foolish: he suffered a predictable defeat of humiliating proportions. But thereafter he planned his political moves with care (and with Louis Howe), estimated the risks as precisely as possible, did what he could to minimize them, and paid close attention to relations between his immediate tactical objectives and his long-term strategic goal. Sometimes he miscalculated badly—he did so repeatedly in 1937, a year of disaster for him and the New Deal—but almost never did he proceed with no calculation at all.

He was constantly described, in public prints, as a "consummate actor"—and the published letters of his boyhood and youth do reveal a strong element of the histrionic in him. (This is often characteristic of unusually shy, sensitive people who learn to hide or overcome their insecurities through role playing; and his mother insists, as photographs of him suggest, that he was as a young boy very shy.) No letters he wrote home from Groton were more heavily underlined, more studded with exclamation points, than those he wrote in the spring of his VI Form year (he was then eighteen) about the part assigned him in W. S. Gilbert's *The Wedding March*, which was that year's school play; and from all accounts he was a hit in the part. A shared love for things theatrical was one of the bonds between him and Howe. He loved to mimic (he could take off Cal Coolidge hilariously), loved to act parts (*presiding* parts) in the costume skits that Howe composed for the Cuff-links Club dinners held annually on FDR's birthday. The histrionic in him greatly aided his delivery of speeches, which he made with maximum effectiveness. His physical presence at the lectern—leonine head tossed back or from side to side, strong jaw outthrust, an extraordinarily mobile countenance registering a great range and subtlety of emotion—was of itself alone powerfully communicative to his immediate audience; and he had a superb speaking voice, a vibrant tenor that could at his will become hard or soft in tone, cold or warm, harsh with scornful anger or gentle with affectionate intimacy. Often he rendered eloquent to the radio-listening ear, and sometimes soaringly so, lines that to the normal reading eye lay flat and dull upon the page.

He proclaimed himself a "snap-judgment man." Interviewed by Marquis Childs in early April 1944, he asserted that the "burden of responsibility" about which Childs questioned him was not really a burden for him because he made decisions so easily. ("You mean, sir, it is . . . not ever difficult?" asked a somewhat incredulous Childs. Replied FDR, "No, I should say, no.") Yet the evidence is abundant that he had a profound aversion to clear-cut irrevocable decisions and went to great lengths to avoid them, in his private as in his public life.

His wife and his mother were essentially antipathetic personalities. Eleanor was primarily animated by generous instincts, Sara by selfish ones, and between the two was a constant tension that broke, now and then, into open quarrel. When this happened, FDR seems seldom if ever to have taken sides. Generally he pretended unawareness that anything had gone wrong. And certainly he never made any sharp distinction between the loyalties he owed his mother and those he owed his wife, much less any clear-cut decision as to which set of loyalties had priority. In the case of his love affair with Lucy Mercer, about which I had been told one evening in Raleigh by Jonathan and Mrs. Daniels (the story was not yet generally known), he was forced by Eleanor to make a flat choice between divorce and a total renunciation of Lucy. He chose the latter (a divorce would end his political career; his outraged mother threatened to disown him), but he evidently did so with secret reservations, for he kept close track of her, may even have been in touch with her through the following years, and certainly renewed relations with her in the closing years of his life. When the issue

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facing him was whether or not to fire an unfit subordinate, he almost always postponed the decision unconscionably or avoided it altogether through false-compromise arrangements—a procedure doubtless dictated by his wish to avoid giving pain but which had the frequent effect of prolonging and increasing it. When the issue was between antagonistic public policy proposals, his initial effort was generally to try to weave them together, as in the famous case of the two tariff-policy speech drafts during the 1932 campaign. He was a Whitmanesque yea-sayer who could speak a firm no with only the greatest difficulty. Hence his natural tendency toward omnibus statutes and administrative agencies wherein sharp differences between ideas and men would (he hoped) be dissolved by a common bureaucratic label and goal statement, the latter so broad as to be practically meaningless.

One would expect such avoidance of sharp definition, such preference of "both/and" over "either/or" (as Kierkegaard put it), to be a manifestation of cowardice—and indeed the accusation of moral cowardice, of mental timidity, was leveled against him on occasion. But consider the indisputable evidence, the numerous crucial instances, of this man's magnificent courage!

His capacity to bear physical pain, hiding it from others behind a calm, cheerful demeanor, was almost incredible. He did so as a boy when an accident broke off one of his teeth, leaving the nerve nakedly exposed: only the sight of his pale drawn face, joined with his inability to speak in other than monosyllables, revealed to his mother that an accident had occurred and he was in agony. He did so as a man, over and over again, during his polio ordeal and the subsequent long, arduous struggle to walk again. Rare is the man who demonstrates such fortitude, such tenacious hold on long-term purpose through thick and thin, as he did during the 1920s. Even more rare is the crippled man who in his dealings with the world manages, as he did, to give no impression of lameness, physical or psychological, but radiates instead the zestful good cheer of a supremely healthy man. Nor was stoic courage the only kind he possessed. He was utterly fearless in the face of sudden, unexpected mortal danger. When a madman fired five revolver shots at him from barely twenty feet away, in Miami on the night of February 15, 1933, he, who perfectly realized that his enforced physical immobility made him an unusually easy target, seemed scarcely to have flinched. Certainly he remained calmly, precisely observant, almost as if the whole episode were witnessed by him from a safe distance—an episode he found intensely interesting but from which he was personally detached—as the remarkably clear, detailed, chronological account he gave newsmen a few hours later reveals. He gave no sign of letdown after the immediate excitement had passed either. Writes Moley: "I never in my life saw anything more magnificent."

In his talk about crises and their resolutions, he almost always referred to God, or God's beneficence. In his account to newsmen of the shooting, he said it was "providential" that the car in which he was riding had moved immediately after the shooting, since it would otherwise have been hemmed in by the excited crowd. When he later sent a telegram of thanks to the woman who had saved his life by grabbing the gunman's shooting arm, he spoke of the "Divine Providence" whereby (as it then appeared) "the lives of all the victims . . . will be spared." To Frances Perkins he once said that, in the ultimate crisis-hours of his polio attack, he felt that God had abandoned him—which suggests that, when he recovered, he felt that God had spared him after testing him for some divine purpose. On the night of March 2, 1933, when he rode a B&O train down from New York to Washington for his first inaugural, he summoned Jim Farley to his stateroom and there talked to him, a devout Catholic, not of the multitudinous problems whose solutions would be his responsibility in two days' time, but of faith in God. More important than any planned operation for the solution of the present crisis was a great people's religious faith, he said; ultimately the salvation of America depended upon the American people's active belief in divine providence, their seeking and acceptance of divine guidance. He himself proposed, had made the arrangements, to launch the New Deal with a prayer: his first public act on inauguration day would be his attendance at a worship service conducted at Saint John's Episcopal Church by the Reverend Endicott Peabody, rector of Groton, headmaster of Groton School.

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It was this last of my listed items—the fact that Franklin Roosevelt was a man of great and evidently remarkably simple religious faith—that seemed and still seems to me the most potent of clues to the innermost workings of his psyche. His kind of superstitiousness, his kind of decision making (a feel for the relative weights of opposing external pressures), his kind of gambling—his opportunism, his optimistic courage under extreme pressures, his otherwise incredible manifestations on crucial occasions of a personal irresponsibility—all these were explicable in terms of what appeared to be his kind of plain, simple, matter-of-fact Christianity. "He felt that human beings were given tasks to perform and with these tasks the ability and strength to put them through," Eleanor Roosevelt has written. "He could pray for help and guidance and have faith in his own judgment [thereby informed by divine will] as a result."

My own summation, on that day of my own decision making, was somewhat as follows: Born an only child into a highly privileged position, bearer of a name made immensely famous by a distant relative, Franklin Roosevelt had early inculcated within himself a sense of his own importance in the total scheme of things. Innately abnormally sensitive to other people (therefore originally shy of strangers), eager to please, anxious to serve, yet with an innate instinct for power, he was early encouraged into role playing, for which he had a natural talent, by his need for defense against the demands of a strong-willed, thoroughly selfish, domineering mother whom he loved. Possessed of an intellect that was broad but shallow, he collected facts and ideas as he did stamps and naval prints, letting them lie flat, distinct, separate in his mind, never attempting to combine them into any holistic truth. Indeed, he shied away from generalized thinking and abstract ideas. If never openly contemptuous of pure thought (certainly he was never assertively so), he had nothing to do with it personally, feeling it to be not merely irrelevant to his vital concerns but even hazardous to them insofar as it might distract his attention from small but important signs or cues presented him by and through his immediate environmental situation. For at the root and core of his conception of self and world was the inward certainty that he was a chosen one of the Almighty, his career a role assigned him by the Author of the Universe, and that the part he must act or play to the best of his ability, feeling himself into it, even identifying with it (up to a point), was a very great one.

Believing absolutely in God the Father and Jesus Christ as the Son of God; believing that God, caring for each individual human being, was infinitely kind and good as well as all-wise and all-powerful; believing or feeling that history was a working out of divine purpose, that every truly fundamental historical force was a manifestation of divine will—believing all this, he must and did believe that history, though it had at any given extended period of time a tidal ebb and flow, had, in the long run, a surging flow in one direction. It was away from polar evil toward polar good. This was the essential progress, from worse to better, a progress that was inevitable because it was God's will. As a chosen one, he himself was an instrument of progress, a special agent on earth of divine beneficence. But *only* an instrument. *Only* an agent. The notion of attempting a mystical union with God, becoming one with him, had it ever occurred to FDR, would have been rejected as an absurd, outrageous presumption—and similarly with regard to efforts to understand God in any deep metaphysical sense. What his heart accepted should not be questioned or even examined by his mind. "I never really thought much about it," he said to his wife when she pressed him (too hard) to say whether or not he was really convinced, intellectually convinced, that Christian doctrine was true. "I think it is just as well not to think about things like that too much."

Thus, Roosevelt's attitude toward power, his attraction to it and exercise of it, was characterized by a humility, a selflessness wholly foreign to a Napoleon, a Mussolini, a Hitler, or a Stalin. By his religious faith and his self-conception in terms of it (his sense of his role in history), he was required actively to seek great power—the greatest earthly power. But he never did so with the feeling that he himself would *become* the power he exercised, or even that it would become his personal property, to be used in service of his purely personal will. It was assigned, imposed from on high. It remained God's. And the ultimate responsibility for his use of it was

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therefore also God's. This conviction enabled him to act, often, as if he were possessed of what Spengler called a "dreamlike certainty" of decision. Often he moved swiftly, boldly, with a seemingly fully informed decisiveness, as if he knew exactly what he was doing and what the results would be (though in reality he did not and could not know), when others in posts of decision—more cerebral than he, more weighed down by a sense of personal responsibility for large-scale consequences—were paralyzed by doubt and fear. His inward experience of such moments, however, was very different from a Napoleon's or a Mussolini's in that his act was not at all the exercise of an iron and conquering will. It was almost the opposite of it. Role and game playing fused: his experience became that of a pious gambler whose risk taking, teleologically motivated, is a form of prayer and an act of faith.

December 24

W. S. Di Piero

Let's assume the stars
dropped, undiminished
in our sight, then cooled,
beading on the new snow.
From our train we see
the sulphur pips of houses
locked in enormous distances,
the land extending
like a thought that's fine
only when it dares
its own expanse. One pair
of lights cuts through.

Back home, the lights go up,
not away (stacked floor
by floor, ledge by ledge,
the living sites, tools,
duties, songs tried, tiered,
decked and balanced)
waiting for the new year
to exalt or dim them.

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History, the Past and the Future

ELIE KEDOURIE

The writing of history is an activity in which the historian engages here and now, an activity that is carried on in the historian's present. But it is also an activity that has reference to, that seeks to obtain knowledge of, a past. Involved then in the historian's activity is the implicit assumption that past and present can be related, can come into contact with one another, that the present can know the past. To a philosophic mind this assumption is by no means obvious; it is one that, on the contrary, has to be established or justified or explained. But the historian, busy with his researches into what has been, will cheerfully take it for granted. He will dismiss the philosopher's finicky doubts with the robust argument that history has been, is, and will continue to be written, regardless of such logic-chopping. Confront the historian, however, with the third term in the series and ask him how he relates the past to the future, and he will, quickly enough, find himself in difficulties. From such difficulties simple, if not simpleminded, ostensiveness—pointing to so many and so many shelves of historical works—will by no means extricate him. Reluctantly, he will have either to call upon the philosopher or to philosophize, himself, in order to establish whether, and if so how, the past is related to the future and whether historiography has a role in relation to the future.

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History is, then, about the past. It is, the *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us, "a relation of incidents." To relate incidents is to tell a story, and indeed the word *story* itself derives from, is an elision of, the word *history*. All stories begin, or ought to begin, with the phrase, "Once upon a time. . . ." To say "once upon a time" is ipso facto to be sure of living in the present, a present different from what has been. This awareness is part of what we understand by self-consciousness or mind; and it would be impossible without memory. Self-consciousness, mind, and memory entail one another, are concomitant with one another.

We are aware, then, of a past because we remember. This remembering is, in the first place, a remembering of ourselves, a self-recognition, a recognition of our identity as at once immutable and undergoing continuous change. Pan, cheated of the nymph Syrinx who had changed into a reed to escape his pursuit, reclines in the forest and through the long hot afternoon consoles himself (as Mallarmé tells us) in the remembrance of other nymphs and goddesses, now long gone—nymphs and goddesses who had succumbed to his embrace. Busying himself with removing the girdles from their shades, he becomes drunk with the recollection. Pan, we see, is making to himself a relation of past incidents—past incidents that concern himself. He is engaged in what we would call autobiography. The philosopher Dilthey has argued that autobiography is indeed the main gate by which we enter into the human world of the past, because autobiography enables the historian to understand human action, so to speak, from the inside.

Whether this is so or not, the argument enables us to define the historian further, by distinguishing him from the autobiographer. While both are concerned with the past, we

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can now say that they are concerned with two different pasts. The autobiographer is concerned with his own natural past, while the historian is clearly not so limited. Shall we then call the historian's past not a natural, but a historical past, and shall we add that this historical past is not the remembrance of things past? For remembrance is a recollection of what has happened to one, or of what one has heard or been told. But history manifestly cannot be limited to any one single person's recollections, nor is it a mere collection of a large number of individual reminiscences.

Before we consider this further, let us return to Pan pursuing his autobiographical musings. In summoning his nymphs to the "sessions of sweet silent thought," he was, Mallarmé tells us, *avide d'ivresse*, eager to become drunk. Pan was, then, using the recollection of his former conquests as consolation and substitute for the pleasure of which the *maligne* Syrinx had, by her flight, cheated him. Pan's purpose, we may say, was a practical one. Here is yet another past to add to our list: as there is a natural and a historical past, so there is a practical past. The practical past is that which we evoke in order to satisfy a current need or purpose—a need or purpose connected with our present circumstances or actions, and with the manner in which we set out to justify or to shape them.

Jews and Christians possess as their Scriptures works that purport to deal with the past, works that can be described as "relations of incidents." But these incidents are not related simply for their own sake. They are related in order to provide examples and guidance to the faithful, to instruct them in the ways of God with man, to transmit to them divine commands. These Scriptures, rightly called sacred, enable men to lead a godly life and to attain, or to receive, salvation. The Scriptures are, of course, not the only writings that are concerned with a practical past—a past that is intimately and urgently connected with present praxis; nor is the praxis with which the Scriptures are concerned the only kind of praxis that accounts of the past may seek to facilitate or promote. In the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, a governing object is clearly to show the workings of human nature as it is, always and everywhere. Thucydides uses the incidents of the war in order to draw a lesson and point a moral for his readers—a practical preoccupation. Tacitus's *Annals* and *Histories*, very different from Thucydides' masterpiece, are equally preoccupied with practice. "His professed purpose in writing," says a commentator, "is to hold up signal examples of political vice and virtue for posterity to execrate or to admire, and to teach his readers . . . that good citizens may live under bad rulers; and that it is not mere destiny or the chapter of accidents, but personal character and discretion, dignified moderation and reserve, that best guard a senator of rank unharmed through time of peril."

Livy's *Annals*, again, show the same practical preoccupation. Livy sees the history of Rome as culminating in the rule of Augustus and full of instructive lessons for the Romans of his day, who, by reading of their ancestors' mishaps and misfortunes, their exploits and triumphs, would be fortified in their resolution to preserve Roman greatness and would be better armed for their task. The *Annals* stand out in any record of historical literature, but equally they may be looked upon as the prototype of a host of books, few of which approach Livy's excellence—books with titles such as *Our Island Story, Pageant of British History, Great Heroes from Charlemagne to Charles de Gaulle, Israel from King David to David Ben-Gurion, The Arab Struggle for Liberation from Muhammad to Jamal Abd el-Nasser*. We may detect the same practical concern in Herodotus, who begins his great work by saying that great deeds have value in retrospect, whether done by Greeks or others, and that such deeds should be exhibited for the instruction, edification, and admiration of his readers.

Is it here then, in this concern with the practical past, that we may identify the role of historiography in relation to the future? Praxis, by definition, is concerned with future-directed action—action to preserve or defend or improve one's situation—and the practical past may be considered as a help toward this end. Here, at any rate, is one answer to our question. In this manner, we shall say, historiography will equip us with lessons and warnings, will raise our morale and self-confidence, will fill us with self-esteem and with pride in our inheritance—and in these various ways will enable us to fashion a better future for ourselves. Future-directed action is a ven-

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ture. The action may or may not contribute to, or have influence over, the success of the venture. The Bible provides a preeminent example of a practical past that has captured the imagination and inspired the actions of successive generations. On the other hand, as Eliot wrote in his poem "Gerontion":

> History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
> And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
> Guides us by vanities.

The practical past may lead those who seek its guidance into a blind alley or into disaster—witness the numerous political ventures that, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, inspired by a nationalist historiography, were intent on resurrecting past glories and vanished power and that suffered shipwreck and ended in ruin.

We have so far identified the character of the practical past and its equivocal relation to the future. But we had begun by distinguishing between a natural past and a past that went beyond the personal recollection that constitutes the natural past—and this latter past we have called historical. How does this historical past stand in relation to the practical past? History, it is commonly said, is a modern European invention. Such a statement does not mean that history, taken simply as a relation of incidents, was unknown before the modern period in Europe. This would be absurd since the work of Thucydides and Livy and Tacitus and innumerable others are manifestly historical works in this sense. Rather, what the statement means to emphasize is that, beginning in the eighteenth century, a current of ideas spread in Europe that ended by presenting a novel and quite original view of man. This current of ideas is that which Meinecke, in delineating its first appearance and subsequent development, called *Historismus;* and which Dilthey (in whom Meinecke found inspiration), seeking to work out a critique of historical reason, was the first to attempt to describe, articulate, and systematize. If we are to sum up this new picture of man in the briefest possible manner, we may say for it that man's nature is his history, that man is fundamentally a historical being. The idea that man is a historical being implies that he is not an essence which his existence in due course unfolds, that he is not governed by an appointed end which gives meaning and coherence to the whole of his existence, and that he is not endowed with a changeless and uniform nature which his actions simply serve to exemplify.

In this view the key to history—if we may speak thus—lies in history itself, and to try to go behind history is impossible, indeed meaningless. History is the record of human actions—those actions that constitute man's nature, by the doing of which man makes or constitutes himself, provides himself with an identity and a personality. This identity is not a fixed quantity; it is one which, facing, coping with, mastering contingencies, and all the while reflecting on itself in the process, finds and recognizes itself in the very flux of continuous change. To use Hegel's formulation, "What the subject is, is the series of his actions." But the series is not programmed or foreordained: every contingency evokes a decision, an action, spontaneous and, before the event, inconceivable. This is what is meant by human freedom. As the narrator in Proust's *Jean Santeuil* puts it: "And I saw my future before me like a stranger whom one meets in the night."

The historical past is the concomitant of this new vision of man's historicity, of man's nature being his history. The historical past, it ought thus to become clear, has nothing in common with the practical past. It will exhibit men at a certain time and in a given place, responding to their circumstances as they understand them, setting sail, steering, hauling, veering, tacking, coasting, turning, on a voyage with no known starting point and with no appointed destination. Such is the historian's past. It affords no guidance for the future. Like the deliverances of the oracle, it is ironically ambiguous. No rules of conduct or laws of behavior can be extracted from it.

But how, then, is history possible? How can the historical past be known? The past is dead and gone, and the historian in his present cannot directly survey or inspect it. Yet from this past there has survived, somehow or another, less by design than by accident, a heap of remains and relics that to the unhistorical eye are a mere heap from which, as need or occasion offers, one may select a document proving title or lineage, or an object attractive in its beauty or alluring in its strangeness.

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This heap, however, the historian transmutes into evidence—present evidence from which a past is inferred. Herodotus called his work *History*. The word *istoria*, which has become our *history*, originally meant, in the Ionian dialect in which it is found, "inquiry." Herodotus uses many kinds of sources: written records, hearsay, the witness of his own eyes. But these sources he submits to, and verifies by, inquiry—*istorie*—and criticizes by common sense. He is not a compiler at the mercy of his sources; rather he is their master. He accepts and rejects evidence and submits it to the question. He does not look upon the sources as authorities but precisely as evidence. This character of the historian's activity is mirrored in the dictionary's definitions. He is, we learn, "one who relates a narrative or a tale, a story-teller," but he is also—which is more to our purpose—the "writer or author of a history; especially one who produces a work of history in the higher sense, as distinguished from the simple annalist or chronicler of events, or from the mere compiler of a historical narrative." And if we should inquire what this "history in the higher sense" is, the dictionary will also oblige: it is "a written narrative constituting a continuous methodical record, in order of time." The method that makes the record methodical is precisely the inquiry, the question by which the historian—moved by a desire to make sense of the fragments that have survived from the past—transforms these fragments into evidence.

But, it may be said, the detective, the lawyer, the genealogist also deal in evidence. They also seek to interrogate the clue, the title deed, the parchment. They do this simply in order to find and convict a criminal, to establish who is the rightful owner of a property, or to determine the legitimate heir to a title of nobility. Once the judge has pronounced according to the law and the rules of the court, the file is closed. But for the historian, no file is ever closed. There is no saying what will start him on a particular inquiry, no determining through which byways and meanderings it will lead him, or how he will end it. How did the war of 1914 start? What led the British government to consider Belgian neutrality a vital interest? What was Britain's view of the European balance of power? What did the idea of the balance of power mean in European politics? Did it always mean the same thing? Who invented and articulated it? By the time the historian is dealing with this last question, we are very far indeed from the guns of August. A mere sampling of the historical literature surrounding the outbreak of the 1914 war will show how utterly various, indeed inexhaustible, are the questions that this event has provoked (and will no doubt continue to provoke) and how impossible to have specified in advance are those that historians have deemed worth asking.

I have spoken of the outbreak of war in August 1914 as an event, and this way of speaking seems both clear and legitimate. But what is this event? Ask the question, and the notion at once begins to seem problematic and obscure. Where does the event begin, and when exactly does it end? If we reflect for a moment, we begin to see that the event is something that the historian makes of the evidence he has gathered. He begins by knowing something incoherently, in fact, by barely knowing it; Kaiser Wilhelm, Franz Josef, Grey, Cambon, Izvolski—they are names, mere labels. Out of these names, with the evidence he interrogates and on which he reflects, he, the historian, makes the event that his readers come to know as the outbreak of the 1914 war. This is what Dilthey has called the hermeneutic circle, in which knowledge, abstract and incoherent to start with, constitutes itself in due course as ever more concrete and coherent. One crucial operation by which intelligibility and coherence are attained—and this attainment, be it remembered, is precarious, always threatened and perpetually subject to questioning and revision—results from the historian placing an event in its context. And the only possible context for an event is that provided by other events. Thus he will show Grey and Berchtold and Cambon and Foch and Moltke and the rest acting, choosing, deciding in response to contingencies that themselves are the outcome of actions, choices, responses for which other agents are responsible—and these other agents similarly in their turn. And the historian will show this, as the dictionary says, "in order of time." By doing this, then, the historian will have shown and thus will have explained, how the Europe of Edward VII and of Franz Josef became the Europe of Lenin, Masaryk, and Pilsudski.

What is true of political is also true of

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economic, social, and intellectual history. In all these fields equally, to explain is to recount, to narrate, to show how one contingent event elicits, gives rise to another (equally contingent) event, and so on ad infinitum. If one were God, one might see all events stretched in a mighty and complex chain, event linked to and giving rise to event. As Leibniz wrote in a sentence adapted from Hippocrates, and one that Meinecke quotes again and again, almost as the very motto of *Historismus: Tout est conspirant.* But historians, of course, are not omniscient: the chain will sometimes extend only for a short distance; it will be broken over many stretches owing to paucity of evidence or the historian's failure of intelligence and imagination.

Just as no event is coherent or intelligible except in the context of other events, so no event can be specially privileged by the historian as being the sole key to, or the crucial explanation of, history or some stretch thereof. Some such implication, among many others, is to be derived from Ranke's famous statements that every epoch is directly before God and that before God all generations of mankind are equal. This must be so, since the historian qua historian does not dispose of a standard or measuring rod, independent from and external to the events, that might enable him to declare one epoch more crucial, or one generation more important, than another. To be able to do so, the historian must possess an independent and invariable unit of comparison. But he, in fact, does not possess it. It might be objected that historians are always making comparisons. Why, they ask, is the British parliament different from the French *parlement,* and this in turn unlike the Spanish *cortes?* They do this, however, in order the more keenly to put the question to the evidence and thus the better to understand the parliament, *parlement,* or the *cortes,* as the case may be. If the comparison in this particular case does yield questions that would not otherwise have been asked, this is surely because all the institutions are part, in some sense, of a common legal and political tradition. Historians compare, in other words, for heuristic purposes, not in order to establish the character of an *Urparlament,* of which these institutions are specimens, or to discover a law governing the appearance, evolution, and disappearance of representative assemblies. Heuristic, in any case, is not a systematic and articulated science. Rather, like the wind, it bloweth where it listeth. In seeking to make sense of his evidence, then, the historian will call upon whatever intellectual and imaginative resources, whatever knowledge and experience he can muster, and a particular heuristic will never by itself produce or guarantee good or reliable history. Some like to compare, others find this a bore. The proof of the pudding will lie in the eating.

If comparison between events in any real sense is out of the question for historians, if every epoch is directly before God (for who is to say whether or in what sense twentieth-century Europe is preferable to the Roman Empire under the Antonines?), if the idea of norms (and consequently of deviations therefrom) cannot be accommodated in historical discourse, the notion of cause is likewise misplaced here. To privilege a particular event as the cause of another event or series of events is at once to plunge into a morass of imprecision.

An event, we have said, becomes intelligible and coherent in the context of other events: we are able to follow a conversation because we understand the interlocutors as responding to one another; and we make sense of a battle, a diplomatic negotiation, the fluctuations in the price of a commodity, the functioning of a parliament, say, or a university as being the outcome of decisions that could have been other than what they were. But if we try to describe the events in the language of causality, we are quickly overtaken by logomachy. For in a conversation, or a battle, or an artistic movement, what is cause, what is effect? An event is now a cause, now an effect, or simultaneously cause and effect.

But if we somehow overcame, or disregarded this confusion, could the language of causality, systematically employed, open for us a way to make historiography useful in coping with the future? For, after all, a cause is always a cause and an effect always a necessary effect. Cause and effect, in other words, are linked by, are the exemplification of, a law. If we could somehow establish a nexus of past causes and effects, then precisely because a law is timeless, what was true in the past would be equally true in the future. If historical study can establish law-

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like regularities, then undoubtedly historiography will have a role in relation to the future. The difficulty here is that history deals with events that by definition have taken place at a given time and in a particular place. To make them amenable to the language of causality, events have to be transformed and homogenized in such a manner that they become specimens or cases that can be analyzed into the requisite components by the causality machine. The French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, the Iranian Revolution have to be liquidized and poured into the centrifuge that will separate the revolutionary essence from its purely accidental French or Russian or Chinese or Iranian admixtures. The metaphor brings out the paradoxical and self-defeating implications of a timeless and a literally utopian historiography.

The last few decades, however, have seen the spread and wide acceptance of a historiographical mode in which this paradox is latent, and even occasionally quite manifest. This mode is associated with the so-called school of the *Annales*. The founders of this school, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, were extremely dissatisfied with the state of French historiography as they encountered it during the first two or three decades of this century. The dominant fashion stressed political and diplomatic history, and thus, they came to believe, was profoundly mistaken. Social and economic history they thought far more important. There is, of course, no reason why a historian should not study social and economic issues that are just as legitimate, as interesting, and as important as any other subject of historical inquiry. And there is, equally, nothing to object to in a historian following his bent in pursuing one kind of inquiry rather than another. But this particular preference soon came to be justified and dignified by a theory that was elaborated not so much by Bloch as by Febvre, and later on by Fernand Braudel, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, and other members of the Sixtième Section of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, which was established in 1947 with an initial grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, and which became, in effect, the headquarters of the new movement and the guardian of its orthodoxy.

This theory gave primacy to economic and social history because political history dealt with superficial things, with things on the surface, with epiphenomena, as one might say. Economic and social history, on the other hand, dealt with underlying reality, with the structure that underlay the surface manifestations of politics and diplomacy. The influence of Marxism on this doctrine is prima facie obvious, and is confirmed, in any case, by Febvre himself. But this metaphor of structure and superstructure is quite inappropriate for the historian, who will be at a loss as to how to decide if one particular event belongs to the structure and another to the superstructure. Is Lenin's leadership of the Bolshevik Revolution superstructural? Is Cleopatra's nose structural? If changes in the price of gold are structural in sixteenth-century Europe, are they also structural in the twentieth-century world—and if not, why not? The difficulty with structure and superstructure is the same as that which confronts us in historical cause and effect. The ambition to divide events between structure and superstructure was further encouraged and reinforced by the admiration of *Annales* historians for the achievements of linguistics, psychoanalysis, and structural anthropology. *Langue* and *parole*, unconscious and conscious, social structure and social relation are all distinctions that point in the same direction, distinctions that claim to unveil the mystery of human behavior, to organize the chaos of appearances that confronts the scientist, and to provide a sure guide through the thickets of data and facts.

Such distinctions, the *Annales* school believes, will be the instrument by which a global or total history can be constructed. Thus Braudel divides history into three layers: the structural, the *conjoncturel*, and the *événementiel*, and the ambition is to relate all three layers, or all three subsystems, into one comprehensive system, into a total history. This ideal is, however, misconceived on two counts. If history is an inquiry that any obscurity, any puzzlement can initiate, and if the inquiry can lead the historian through unexpected paths to vistas he had not suspected when he started on the inquiry, this attempt to regiment happenings into categories of the structural, the *conjoncturel*, and the *événementiel* will soon seem a procrustean, an arbitrary, enterprise. It will also break down for another equally serious reason. As an ad-

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mirer of the *Annales* school, Traian Stoianovich has pointed out (*French Historical Method: The Annales Paradigm,* 1976) that the distinctions advocated by Braudel are by no means the only ones that have to be attended to. In the interests of a total history, Braudel has taken over from Claude Lévi-Strauss a communications theory whereby communication proceeds at three levels of expression: the exchange of women, the exchange of goods and services, and the exchange of other types of messages. Like Lévi-Strauss, Braudel also distinguishes between conscious and unconscious forms of communication. Since, further, he distinguishes between three units of temporal measure—the time of structure, the time of conjunctures, and the time of events—the systematic analysis of the general communications system of a given collectivity would require the identification of at least eighteen ($3 \times 2 \times 3$) subsystems. But this is very far from being the number of subsystems that a total history must comprise. Stoianovich points out that there are other message systems that have to be added to Lévi-Strauss's three, and when all of these, in all their possible combinations, are taken into account, the total number of subsystems will amount to no less than 16,777,216. "With the aid of the computer," remarks Stoianovich, "it should be possible to analyze even 16,777,216 variables. One problem remains, however. Who would read the enormous number of printouts?"

In the historical hierarchy of the *Annales* school, there is absolutely no doubt that structural history has primacy. It is at the opposite pole from *histoire événementielle,* which deals with the mere froth of events, with things that our gossip-column writers think worthy of attention. *Histoire événementielle* Braudel contemptuously dismisses as "cette petite science de la contingence." "Down with occurrences!" he exclaims. What is worthy of attention is that which lies in the depths, which goes on, perhaps for centuries, unchanged or hardly changed. Le Roy Ladurie, indeed, goes so far as to speak of "history without people," a history, say, of climate, which is "free of anthropocentric preoccupation or presumption." History is emptied of people for the further reason that the historian is now concerned with systems and subsystems, with signals and factors, with series and index numbers. Another *Annales* historian, Pierre Chaunu, in fact, looks forward to the quantification of the past, to the transformation of all history into *histoire sérielle.* This *histoire sérielle* will, ideally, link, in a chain of statistics and statistical projections, the past to the present and the present to the future.

But can a history without people, a dehumanized history, in effect a table of functions and variables, support the notion of past or future? Lévi-Strauss, whose work, as has been said, has inspired the historiographical theory of the *Annales* school, has drawn the only possible conclusion from this state of affairs. From his own structuralist perspective, history is seen as either informing more and explaining less or explaining more and informing less. The first alternative is the so-called *histoire événementielle,* which is no more than an inventory or storehouse of examples, while the second is structural history. But the things that give structural history its intelligibility and its power to explain are biology, psychology, anthropology, and the physical sciences. Why, then, not go the whole hog and abolish history?

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Aiming High

JOHN CLIVE

THE LETTERS OF HENRY ADAMS. Volume 1: 1858–1868. Volume 2: 1868–1885. Volume 3: 1886–1892. *Edited by J. C. Levenson, Ernest Samuels, Charles Vandersee, Viola Hopkins Winner, with the assistance of Jayne N. Samuels and Eleanor Pearre Abbot. Harvard University Press. $100 the set.*

Two years in Europe; two years studying law in Boston; and then I propose to emigrate and practice at Saint Louis. What I can do there, God knows; but I have a theory that an educated and reasonably able man can make his mark if he chooses, and if I fail to make mine, why, then—I fail and that's all.

This is an excerpt from the very first letter printed in this admirable edition, a letter written by the twenty-year-old Henry Adams to his brother Charles Francis, Jr., on November 3, 1858, from Berlin. The last of the 1,277 letters published in this edition, two-thirds for the first time as originally written, is dated February 3, 1892. Three further volumes are to come, ending with 1918, the year of Adams's death.

After graduating from Harvard College, Adams temporarily settled in Germany in order to master the language, to study Roman law, and to prepare himself for a legal career. As his Berlin letter indicates, he already half suspected that he might not make his mark as a lawyer. And, of course, he turned out to be right in his surmise. He was destined to make it as a teacher, essayist, biographer, novelist, historian, and, not least, autobiographer. And what a mark it was! It's a pretty safe bet that there are today not a few people who pride themselves on being educated, for whom the name Adams conjures up not the second or sixth president of the United States, but the author of *The Education of Henry Adams*, *Democracy*, and *Mont-Saint Michel and Chartres*.

Readers of the *Education* will not find his preoccupation with failure surprising, since that book—itself a classic example of its genre, assured of as great a prospect of immortality as any written in America—is ostensibly a record of "failure." But there is a big difference between the retrospective reconstruction of the events of one's own life for the purpose of illustrating the thesis that one's education had not adequately prepared one for coping with existence in the United States of the nineteenth century, and the day-to-day record of one's feelings and reactions as revealed in letters written at the time.

A good many recent commentators on Adams have tended to emphasize the poseur aspect of his self-depiction in the *Education* as someone who had "failed." Some have seen that self-depiction as stemming from his failure to gain political power in the grand tradition of the Adams family; others from his failure to play the social role he coveted; and still others from an unresolved conflict between Puritan scruple and a temperament strongly aesthetic and sensual. Whatever the answer—and Adams, as he well knew, possessed one of those complex and elusive personalities that ultimately defies categoriza-

JOHN CLIVE, William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of History and Literature at Harvard University, is the author of *Macaulay: The Shaping of the Historian* and *Scotch Reviewers: "The Edinburgh Review," 1802–1815*.

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tion—his letters show that he was very conscious from his early twenties on of both the danger and the meaning of "failure."

Within a year of sending his letter from Berlin, he again writes to the same brother—this time from Dresden—that so far as his year of study had gone, "I have failed and done little or nothing." At the same time he feels bound to add that "the failure, if failure it is, will be in me and not in the European experiment which may be of immense use to a capable man." In other words, whether or not his first extended stay in Europe, which was to last two years, would further his later career in specific ways, it would certainly help to form his mind and character for whatever might lie ahead. In 1866, writing once again to Charles Francis, Jr.—this time from London where he had spent five difficult years as confidential secretary to his father, who was the American minister there during the Civil War—Adams reiterates the point that all his experience thus far has been grist for his mill:

> I have never varied my course at all. From my birth to this moment it has been straight as an arrow. Such as I am, I am complete. All the accidents of life have fallen in with the bent of my disposition and the previous course of my training. I repeat it, such as I am, the product is unique and positive. I shall get along; and if I am in the end what you in your sublimity call a failure, I shall still have enjoyed what I, in a spirit of more philosophical and milder tendency, consider a rounded and completed existence.

If one seeks an explanation for this sort of defensive posture, one must take account not only of his older brother's articulate moral pressure but also of the force of his father's silence. Writing to his student Henry Cabot Lodge in 1876, Henry notes with as much surprise as pleasure that the senior Charles Francis had gone so far as to compliment Lodge for his essay on Anglo-Saxon law: "He never wrote to me nor even spoke to me in his life about any production of mine."

In fact, family pressures apart, Adams was his own sternest taskmaster. He may have been uncertain about his ultimate destination—"Where I shall end, *das weiss der liebe Gott!*" he exclaimed to his brother Charles Francis in 1863; but that exclamation came after an account of a course of studies he had been following that had ranged from history to financial theory and from the forms of political economy to philosophy: "I write and read; read and write." Left to his own devices in London, not just because he felt himself a failure in society but also because he could not bear to encounter southern sympathizers, he nonetheless had no unoccupied moments: "My candles are seldom out before two o'clock in the morning, and my table is piled with half-read books and unfinished writing."

Already he aimed high in his intellectual quest. "[My father] bases his world upon moral laws," he writes from London in 1865. "I rank moral laws with all other laws, as matter for study, developement and perhaps of change. I am continually puzzled to know how we get along together." That state of puzzlement was to last a productive lifetime, as was his indefatigable capacity for hammering away at trying to find answers. While teaching at Harvard, in 1871, he reports to a friend that "I have worked like a dog and learned more than I ever expected to do." Five years later, after advising Charles Milnes Gaskell to run one of his own coal mines in order to escape hypochondria, Adams added: "That is a pursuit which will probably answer as well as mine does, which is, so to speak, an intellectual coal-mine." But labor alone was not enough. One had to be driven to it by intellectual curiosity. Visiting Joseph Chamberlain and his new American wife in England in 1891, Adams noted that "Joseph has five big boilers and a gas boiler; a big and little dynamo, and so on. . . . He declared that no one had ever asked to see his boilers before." One can't help but be reminded of Mrs. Lightfoot Lee, the heroine of Adams's novel *Democracy*, whose restlessness, discontent, and ambition were like those "of a passenger on an ocean steamer whose mind will not give him rest until he has been in the engine-room and talked with the engineer."

It was this consuming curiosity, this relentless urge to make sense of the world and its workings at any cost, that drove Adams eventually to develop his own scientific theories of history and society. That same compulsion to keep asking hard questions, together with a refusal ever to be totally satisfied with any answers, his own included, helped to make him a uniquely effective teacher—a talent

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that, in spite of his own protestations to the contrary in the *Education*, is amply confirmed in his letters. The best teachers are usually those who show by their own example what it means to be a good student; and since that was Adams's deeply held conviction all his life, he excelled in the role. Less than a month after beginning his assistant professorship of medieval history at Harvard, he wrote to Henry Higginson that he had returned there not so much to teach as to learn: "I am working harder than I ever worked as an undergraduate, and I hope in time to know something." He found "a pleasing excitement" in having to lecture tomorrow on a period of history that he had not even heard of until today. His rule in devising examinations was to ask questions he himself was unable to answer. Not surprisingly he became the object of "unlimited cursing [by the students], owing to the fact that I intentionally gave them papers so difficult that half the youths could do very little with them."

But the best students rose to the challenge, among them Lodge, a dozen years his junior, to whom Adams addressed some fine pedagogical letters. "It makes little difference what one teaches," he wrote Lodge from Egypt in 1873. "The great thing is to train scholars for work." Analogously, it made little difference what special line of work in medieval history Lodge chose to take, "provided you can catch the tail of an idea to develope with solid reasoning and thorough knowledge." But Adams did not confine himself to giving advice, however valuable. Because he himself was often discouraged and uncertain, he knew how to empathize with others affected by the same mood. "That you found yourself wallowing in a boundless ocean of history," he writes to Lodge, "I can very well imagine. One has a very helpless feeling the first time one plunges into a new existence, no matter what the medium is. . . . Patience is the salvation of men at all such emergencies. I have never found that fail to pull me triumphantly through."

Lodge became one of the contributors to the *Essays in Anglo-Saxon Law* (1876), which resulted from Adams's pioneering Harvard seminar in medieval history. "Nothing since I came to Cambridge," Adams wrote to his prize student about the completion of that volume, "has given me so much and so unalloyed satisfaction as the completion of our baking this batch of doctors of philosophy." "For once"—and this, for Adams, habitually self-critical and dissatisfied, was perhaps the greatest self-tribute he was capable of paying—"I have been in a state of absolute satisfaction for a whole day." His undisguised pride and pleasure on that occasion was not only in his students, but also in what their achievement signified for the growth of a native American culture. "I believe," he wrote, "that my scholars will compare favorably with any others, English, German, French or Italian. I look with more hope on the future of the world as I see how good our material is."

The satisfaction he got from the attainments of his students must be seen from the perspective supplied by a previous letter, written almost a year before, in which he inveighed against the pretentiousness of Harvard "culture" as it existed in the mid-seventies. It was all secondhand, based on the latest European fashions: "Such a swarm of prigs as we are turning out, all formed by prigs and all suffering under a surfeit of useless information, is new to human experience. Are we never to produce one man who will do something himself, is the question I am helplessly asking, and you [Sir Robert Cunliffe] can imagine that my remarks to my students are gradually growing somewhat sharp-pointed and calculated to get me into trouble some day." He hated Harvard's complacency. "My fingers itch to puncture it; to do something which will sting it into impropriety. I want to tweak its nose." His exasperation was not merely negative. It was, rather, the product of hurt pride and betrayed affection. At Oxford, in 1873, he had found little to make him "tremble for my own University in the way of men. The English Universities run too much into money and social distinctions. The spirit is better in ours." That is why, months later, he was, on the one hand, so appalled by Harvard's failings, and, on the other, so delighted with the successes of his own students. As a twenty-two-year-old in Rome, he had advised his brother Charles Francis that those American visitors who had any feeling for art or interest in its advance should go again and again to the studio of their compatriot, the

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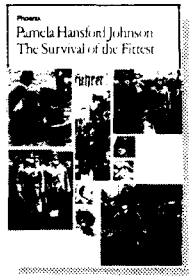

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sculptor Randolph Rogers. And it was to the same correspondent, seven years later (1867), that he confided his impatience with the high-flown artificiality of the American oratorical style: "Our Everetts and our Sumners remind me of the Treasury Building at Washington. A plain flat wall and a set of business offices are by this style disguised like a Greek temple, and our barbarism is made more evident than ever by the shameless audacity of our theft."

The note of patriotic pride in America, particularly in comparison to Europe, resounds time and again in Adams's letters. In January 1860 he writes to his mother from Dresden that Europeans are "not great enough to understand and appreciate the state of society in which the equals of their princes [in this instance himself] are only private persons, and they cannot conceive how a person whose ancestors have held in succession every position of dignity and power which their nation could give, can consider himself as their equal." In the same vein, just a few days later, he informs her that "we Americans here are rather proud. We don't lick boots like the English nor court notice." As for the Germans, they "are still a semi-barbarous people and the ideas of the middle-ages are alive and kicking in the nineteenth century."

Pride in America meant pride in democracy on the part of someone who had learned to think of Tocqueville as his model, and who studied his life and works "as the Gospel of my private religion." At work in England, the home of "Snobisma Anglicanum," as his father's secretary, Adams came to appreciate the value of American democracy and the extent to which the privileged classes had come to fear it. If the present state of things lasts long, he reports to William H. Seward's son Frederick in 1863, "we shall soon raise a democracy in England that it will be hard for them to put to sleep again." A year later he tells his brother Charles Francis that he has long seen "what so many Americans will not see, that our system and the English system are mortal enemies."

This attitude on Adams's part cannot be dismissed as temporary irritation with a nation not totally in sympathy with the northern cause during the Civil War. Writing from Quincy in 1868 he confides to his friend Gaskell that "I get along better on my native heath, with tomahawk and feathers, than I did in sword and breeches at Buckingham Palace." Seven years later he warns Sir Robert Cunliffe, another close English friend, that "your rotten old English society can't last another generation." His message to John Hay in 1883 is to tell Lord Acton "to come over here, and live for the future, not for the middle-ages." He was, of course, joking when, describing his forthcoming Harvard course in American colonial history to Cunliffe, he defined his "joyful task" as exposing "the Britisher, his wiles and greed, envy, brutality, malice, ignorance, and other amiable qualities"; and then went on to depict himself telling his students: "There he is, the British aristocrat! the sum of all wickedness and tyranny! We licked him! Ha! Ha! (with savageness.) We air a great people!" But underneath the playful banter lies a love of country and democracy genuinely and deeply felt.

One tends to think of Adams, quite properly, as skeptical, ironical, sardonic, cerebral, because that is the side of him he makes most evident in the *Education*. But another, profoundly emotional side, usually hidden from all but his closest friends, certainly formed part of his personality. It emerges, of course, most explicitly after the suicide of his wife, Clover, late in 1885. It was in the spring of 1872 that, after telling him to prepare himself for a shock, Adams wrote his brother Brooks about his (still-secret) engagement to Marion ("Clover") Hooper:

> I'm afraid she has completely got the upper hand of me, for I am a weak-minded cuss with women, and the devil and all his imps couldn't resist the fascination of a clever woman who chooses to be loved.

To Gaskell he wrote more candidly, a few weeks later:

> She is certainly not handsome, nor would she be quite called plain, I think. . . . She talks garrulously, but on the whole pretty sensibly. . . . She dresses badly. She decidedly has humor and will appreciate *our* wit. She has enough money to be quite independent. She rules me as only American women rule men, and I cower before her. Lord! how she would lash me if she read the above description of her!

Some outsiders were harsher. Charles Fran-

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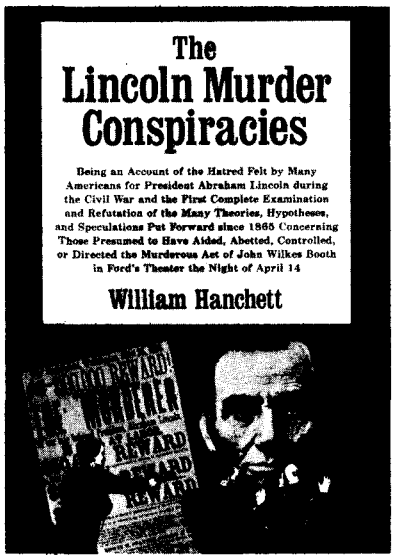

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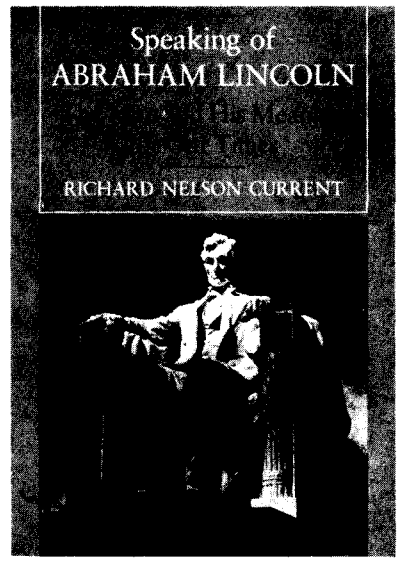

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cis, Jr., described a meeting in Paris with his brother Henry and his sister-in-law in these terms (1873):

> My brother has grown to be a damned, solemn, pompous little ass, and his wife is an infernal bore;—they are the most married couple I have yet seen:—and when I came into the room I found (her, how I hate her!—she talks in a low voice, and prances along like the Palfreys—bah!—oh!—she's always saying something to me,—she's doing it now!)—well I found them sitting to-gether and she holding his hand, and then she makes cups of Turkey coffee all day and makes everyone drink them, even me,—and everything will keep you awake,—or give you a cold—or disorder your stomach,—or give you the pip—oh! hell—hell—hell!

For Henry himself, however, Clover became, as he wrote her during one of their rare separations, "the only woman in the world who fits my cravings and never sounds hollow anywhere." Her suicide impelled him to declare that "fate at last has smashed the life out of me; but for twelve years I had everything I most wanted on earth." Yet he did not collapse under the blow. To Thomas F. Bayard, whose daughter had died of a heart attack just a few weeks after Clover had taken her own life, he wrote: "Life is grim. Yet we are under a sort of compact with society to take, without complaint, whatever comes; and within the last few weeks I have learned that, in the mass of human distress, trials like yours and mine can be endured, since so many men and women do endure them."

His stoicism, his close friends, and his undiminished appetite for hard work saw him through. In August 1890 he and his friend the painter John La Farge set off on a long voyage to the South Seas, stopping for some time in Hawaii, Samoa, and Tahiti. That voyage produced a wonderfully evocative set of letters, mainly addressed to Elizabeth Cameron whom, so Professor J. C. Levenson tells us in his perceptive introduction to these volumes, "Adams in his fifties came to love in ways he could neither control nor suppress."

The South Seas turned out to be balm for his troubled spirit. They also gave ample release to those sensuous and aesthetic components of his temperament that had always formed part of his personality but had rarely been permitted to find full expression. Of Mauna Loa he writes that it stretched down an interminable slope, "with the strange voluptuous charm peculiar to volcanic slopes, which always seem to invite you to lie down on them and caress them." And this is part of his description of the Samoan Siva dance: "Out of the dark, five girls came into the light, with a dramatic effect that really I never felt before. Naked to the waist, their rich skin glistened with cocoanut oil. Around their heads and necks they wore garlands of green leaves in strips, like seaweeds, and these too glistened with oil, as though the girls had come out of the sea."

But one does not, in fact, require letters such as these to become aware of the impression produced on Adams by the landscape and people of the South Seas. As one reaches page four hundred of the third volume, one's eyes are allowed to feast on what constitutes a real editorial coup de théâtre: six Tahitian watercolors painted by Henry Adams in 1891. Beautifully reproduced, and glowing with color and light, they manifest, better than even the most eloquent printed words, the peace of mind and spirit attained for a time by this perpetually curious and restless American Odysseus, one of the most puzzling and fascinating figures in the thought and literature of the country whose failings he was capable of deriding as vehemently as he loved its ideals.

These are marvelous letters; not just because they illuminate Adams's own life and personality, but also because they supply vivid glimpses of some of his better-known contemporaries: Garibaldi in Palermo (1860), "laughing and chattering and wagging his red-gray beard, and puffing away at his cigar"; John Stuart Mill in London (1863), "a curious looking man with a sharp nose, a wen on his forehead and a black cravat"; Julia (Mrs. Ulysses) Grant, "squint[ing] like an isosceles triangle" at the White House (1869); Henry James in London (1880), "standing on the hearth-rug, with his hands under his coat-tails talking with my wife exactly as though we were in Marlborough Street"; the Matthew Arnolds in Washington on Christmas Day (1883), "mournfully gazing from the Arlington windows out upon snow-banks and fog like their dear infernal England." To say that one

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awaits the concluding volumes of these letters with greedy impatience is to understate the case.

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Reviewed by JOSEPH P. FELL

John William Miller taught philosophy at Williams College from 1924 to 1960. For all of that time he was one of the greatest of American teachers. Yet, apart from the dedication of several books to him, his profound influence on generations of students has until recently gone largely unrecorded. (An exception was George P. Brockway's vivid and accurate account of Miller's teaching in the Spring 1980 issue of this journal.) Miller's career was amply justified by his classroom teaching. Before the last year of his long life, he had published only four essays, and no one who knew him thought that more was necessary. It seemed an evident case of a man whose wholehearted devotion to teaching had precluded reams of publications.

Yet over the years John William Miller had in fact written a substantial number of essays on a variety of interrelated topics. Toward the close of Miller's life, the publisher George Brockway, who was a student of Miller's, persuaded him to release this material for publication, and the initial volume, *The Paradox of Cause*, appeared in 1978, a few months before Miller's death. The second volume, *The Definition of the Thing*, consisting of Miller's Harvard dissertation plus some later notes on language, appeared in 1980, to be followed by essays on history (1981), on Miller's notion of "the midworld" (1982), and on psychology (1983). Brockway served as editor of all volumes. In some cases he was able to work from indications left by Miller for ordering the essays; in others, he faced the sort of difficult organizational decisions that often confront the legatee of unclassified posthumous papers. The result is a most intelligently organized thematic selection, but neither a critical nor a complete edition. For dates of the essays and, hence, a sense of the chronological development of Miller's thinking, the scholar would need to consult Miller's manuscripts in the Williams College Library. Happily, making sense of these volumes does not require tracing the development of Miller's philosophy, since the changes over the years consisted mainly in shifts of emphasis and terminological reformulation. The five volumes comprise a complementary set of variations on a single theme that occupied Miller from first to last: the epistemological and ontological unity of persons and things. While these books can thus be read in any order, the final volume perhaps affords the easiest point of entry; Miller here brings the essentials of his position to bear in a devastating critique of Skinnerian behaviorism.

Why had Miller withheld the bulk of his work from publication? The self-imposed demands of his teaching seem to have been only part of the reason. Another was his "dated" style of writing: essays fashioned in a deceptively simple, almost colloquial prose—sometimes reminiscent of Lincoln's and Emerson's, though far harder to understand. But the primary reason was that Miller knew his thinking to be as unfashionable as his prose. At a time when others were abandoning philosophical idealism, he sought to revise it. He stuck to his guns as wave after wave of anti- or post-idealist positions swept the American philosophical scene: critical realism, behaviorism, instrumentalism, logical positivism, linguistic analysis, existentialism. Characteristically, he found reasons for taking all of these positions seriously, yet in the last analysis he found most of them "ahistorical" in orientation, and he found none of them capable of coordinating the human and the natural in a manner that did justice to both. On these points he was insistent.

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Miller will say, at certain critical junctures, "I don't like" such-and-such an idea. This isn't an intrusion of arbitrary preference into his argument. It's rather a recognition that arguments are made by persons who are themselves at stake in their arguments, and Miller displays an uncanny ability to isolate the often-unspoken personal premises behind the arguments of a number of philosophers and psychologists. He frequently reminds the reader that the objective or natural, an impersonal order, occurs in consequence of a human will or demand or it doesn't occur at all. The "paradox of cause" is that in a world that comprised only natural causation, natural causation could not be disclosed. Subjective purpose and objective nature are mutually implicative, or their relation is "dialectical." To attempt to understand the personal entirely in terms of the impersonal is to rule out of court the very will and understanding that demand a stable and independent environment, thus launching the idea of an impersonal order in the first place. Those, such as B. F. Skinner, who wish to have an ordered environment but discredit free human agency, fail to recognize their own inevitable role in disclosing that environment.

Miller characteristically reaches his own conclusions about the interrelation of man and nature by means of probing examinations—both sympathetic and critical—of the major interpretations of the self-world relation that have been generated in the history of philosophy. He sees each of them as an essay in "control"—a proposal of a general order (an "infinity" or "form") in terms of which man has tried to disclose the nature and interrelation of the particulars ("content") of his world. It is only by this will to control (to know, to utilize) his environment that man is able to gain real control (self-knowledge and personal efficacy) over himself. Thus, spiritualist and voluntarist philosophies arise out of the demand for a world in which purposes count (can be regarded as "ontological" or "constitutive"). Naturalisms arise out of the need for an environment independent of all purposes, one of ascertainable causes and predictable effects. Subjectivist and objectivist philosophies each arise from a demand that must be met, yet each destroys the other if it takes itself to be the whole story. The recognition that one needs *both* "purpose-control" *and* "cause-control" is the strong suit of the philosophy of dualism, which refuses to sacrifice cause to purpose or purpose to cause. But dualism fails in its inability to show how an originative human will and a natural order can coexist or interact. Post-dualistic (post-Cartesian) positions such as empiricism, idealism, and pragmatism are shown to be efforts to interrelate the order of purposes and the order of natural causation.

Thus far, Miller's tracing of the development of types of philosophy is reminiscent of, and frankly indebted to, the thought of Hegel and of Miller's own teacher W. E. Hocking. The history of philosophy exhibits philosophy's revision of itself by a dialectical development in which each successive type of philosophy satisfies a demand hitherto unmet, yet remains only part of the story of the human will to order itself and its world insofar as it takes its own particular story as the final or self-sufficient one. Philosophical revision thus has the form of a process of both persistence and change, in which the legitimate demand of each philosophy is inherited and preserved, while the claim of each philosophy to be the whole story is canceled.

Although Miller's philosophy, essentially a philosophy of history, is in these respects indebted to Hegel, he cannot accept Hegel's claim that this odyssey of self-revision culminates in "the absolute"—a final knowledge in which man has risen to the standpoint of God. Fond of Lincoln's assertion that "we cannot escape history," Miller remains humanistic and skeptical of all claims to theological finality. He was, he said, wary of "mountain-top experiences." His temper is Kantian, with some affinity to American pragmatism, in that he argues that knowledge does not depend on completeness and absolute certainty. Insist in advance that truth be final and incorrigible and you doom yourself to skepticism. Philosophy must come to terms with finitude, contingency, the accidental. He wanted, he said, to "affirm the moment," to "give ontological status to finitude."

But how to do this? Although Miller apprentices himself to the history of philosophy and finds it far more than a record of naive errors, he is an original thinker. He refuses, in fact, to see apprenticeship and originality as anything but complementary—another sign of the dialectical cast of his thinking. Originality

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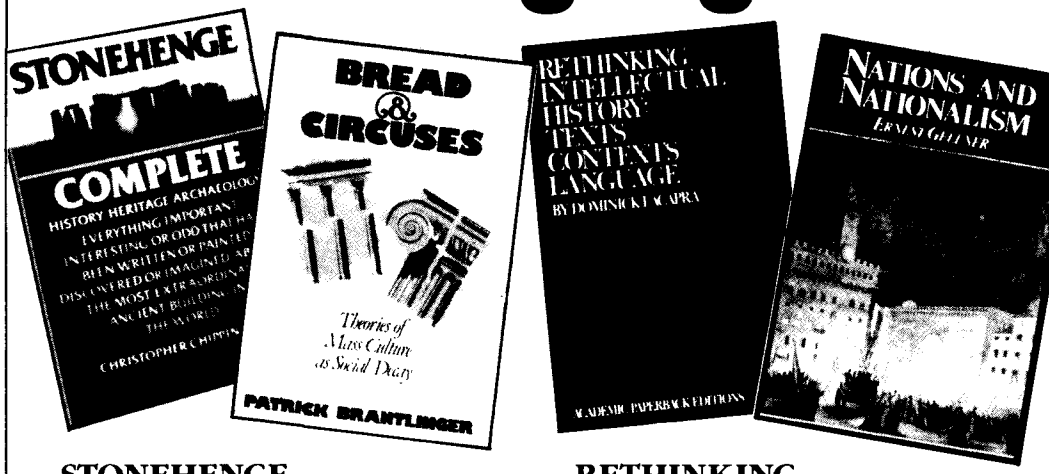

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lies in "revising" an inheritance, and Miller sees a moral urgency in this. He maintains that the sole possible locus of defensible order and lawfulness is human history, but finds most of his contemporaries guilty of discounting it, suspicious of the precarious, all-too-human sort of order that history exhibits. His response: if you want an order that owes nothing to man, you'll end up with no order at all. The quest for the safety and security of an ahistoric finality overlooks man's own collective responsibility for maintaining an ordered environment. "If we want reverence, anything sacred and so imperative, we must advance now to history. . . . There is the common world, the actual one."

History is precisely the region of human originality, of those human res gestae or "utterances" that "declare a world." No extrahistorical or extraphilosophical conditions can account for these originative utterances, for it is these utterances *themselves* that first propose or "project" the formal orders (for example, mathematics, logic, causation) which are the prerequisites for finding causal conditions. Without this human history, no natural history; without this philosophical projection of the formal conditions necessary for knowledge (for example, identity, difference, antecedent and consequent, etc.), no sciences. Such acts of will or utterances propose the "norms" or "rules" presupposed by any particular disclosures. Anything that presents itself as real, fact, or datum can do so only within a formal order that determines what is to count as real, fact, or datum. In arguing for such free and "constitutive" formal ordering, Miller clearly sides with one particular part of his inheritance, philosophical idealism.

The genuinely basic and formative historical crises, whether in science or in society, are philosophical—not conflicts in detail but those in which one conception of the order of the whole is pitted against another. Here originality comes into play. Such constitutional disputes are "the loci of radical disagreement." Philosophy is the history of these conflicts, a fate that thought must undergo once it has committed itself to the search for intelligibility and lawfulness.

Hence the central problem posed by Miller's philosophy, and by post-Kantian thinking in general. If human proposals of an ideal order are prerequisite for the disclosure of real particulars, and if such proposals conflict with each other and none has any ahistoric or absolute guarantee, then must we not conclude that these proposals are simply competing human fictions? Miller allows that this is the historical juncture we seem to have reached, but holds that "the chaos of today [nihilism and skeptical relativism] is the historical consequence of a metaphysical lapse . . . a consequence of the account of the world that the learned propagate. For them the actual has no authority and rates no reverence because it is not recognized." Miller's bold and original crusade is for "the as yet unacknowledged actuality of the midworld."

Miller rightly regards his treatment of "the midworld" as his primary accomplishment (though he finds it prefigured in Hegel and in Royce) and hence the 1982 volume of essays devoted to this topic, *The Midworld of Symbols and Functioning Objects*, is the apex of the series. The notion of the midworld, or region of the actual, challenges at its roots the inherently dualistic presumption that the sphere of human formal utterances is simply a sphere of "subjective" fictions or simplifications that has nothing in common with the region of natural reality from which these utterances allegedly cut us off.

I shall not succeed here in doing justice to the idea of the midworld; the interested reader will want to consult at very least the entirety of the 1982 volume and, preferably, the many implicit and explicit references to the notion occurring throughout the remaining volumes as well. For a start, it is important to recognize that Miller doesn't pull the notion of the midworld out of thin air; he finds it illustrated again and again in the history of science and technology, as well as in ordinary experience. Thus the midworld is already present. The task is to recognize it and to take it into account philosophically. That it is difficult to recognize, and that philosophical talk about it sounds so strange, is owing to an "intellectualism" that has strayed from the nature of human action and its objects, chiefly because it has been felt that if you wanted an ordered world you had best keep the potentially unruly human element out of it. It has not been well understood that the conditions that permit disorder and error are the very same conditions that make possible avoidance

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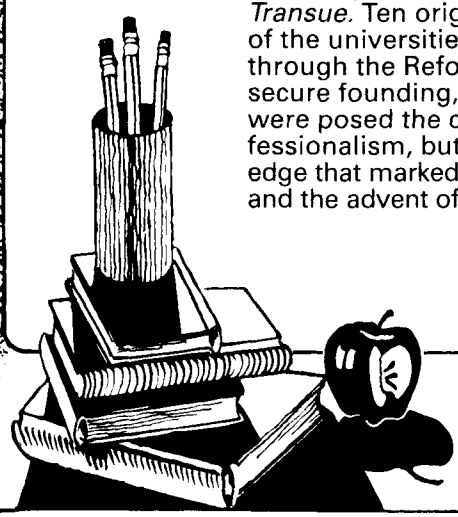

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of error and genuine knowledge of the real.

The midworld is to be seen as a historical process, to be identified by an analysis that goes back from the subjective and the objective, the ideal and the real, to their common genesis in concrete human activities of grappling with nature. "[A] genetically [historically] produced end [such as a science of nature] must not scorn the base degrees by which it has risen." Miller warns the reader that his account of the origin and justification of the categories on which knowledge depends will be thoroughly "earthy." Either these categories originate in common human action and also find their justification there, or else they will be said to have a "transcendental" origin (as in Plato or Kant) that renders their application to the here-and-now experience of nature problematic—a kind of imposition from above. In other words: if thought and reality are not intrinsically conjoined from the beginning, there is no possibility of ending up with a thought that truly discloses reality. Formal thought and reality emerge together in the act. The only possible basis, or orienting point, for any philosophical analysis is human action in history. (It would thus not be amiss to call Miller's position a Philosophy of the Act, or of Actuality.)

Miller defines the human act broadly, so that it is coextensive with what he calls "utterance." In so doing, he intends to recognize that distinctively human action not only sees and uses but names (gives form or identity to) what it uses. Language is not a kit of tools that one might or might not use, but is rather the proposal of an order that organizes things as things in the first place. No language, no intelligible world. In saying that this act of uttering is "original," Miller is claiming that it neither precedes nor follows the disclosure of things, contrary to most of the usual accounts of the relation of language and action to things. Absolute idealism or rationalism, holding that thought generates universal categories independently of experience, is wrong. Absolute empiricism, holding that experience of data occurs independently of thought, is equally wrong. The act or utterance, then, is the *simultaneous* disclosure of form and content, of universal and particular, of idea and datum.

For this to make much sense or have any plausibility, examples are needed. Miller generously supplies them. Many of them are drawn from mathematics—but not from pure mathematics, for Miller holds that mathematics begins as, and has its final justification in, the disclosure of things. These examples are thus concrete illustrations of a primary Millerian thesis: that the pure/applied and form/content distinctions are dialectical ones. Utterances, including the utterances of mathematics and logic, are in their origins *at once* pure and applied. Form (universality, the systematic), if it is to be justifiable, occurs first of all *in* an action that discloses content (particularity, the contingent). Example: he who so much as counts his toes has disclosed both the number of toes he has (a particular content) and the order of mathematics (an ideal or formal order). Example (a favorite of Miller's): the use of a yardstick to measure the distance between two points. Thereby the real puts in an appearance ("these trees five yards apart") and an ideal order is warranted (a system of mensuration).

Miller asks us to attend closely to the "ontological status" of the yardstick as a typical example of the actual. One cannot choose between regarding it as ideal and regarding it as real, subjective or objective, psychological or physical, human or natural, form or content, universal or particular, mathematical or material. No traditional "dyadic" account of it can tell us what it is; it challenges our usual habits of thought. It is, in Miller's terms, "triadic" or "actual." What is still missing in Kant is the story of the genesis of forms and categories in the actual, in historical utterances, and it is here alone that their validation can be found. The actual is, as the term would indicate, the correlate of an act—in this case, the act of mathematical measurement. *What is ontologically primary is actuality.* The actual is neither a mere personal function nor a mere impersonal object; it is a "functioning object" or "embodied utterance" or "incarnate word" or "unit of account." While it is the embodiment of a human will to order, it is at the same time a critic of the merely subjective: the tree I thought to be fifty yards from my house turns out to be seventy-five. The act not only launches purposes but controls them. The world of words, numbers, time and space, of volts, atoms, and miles, of microscopes, telescopes, and clocks, is a midworld. The primary functioning object is the human body.

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The crucial point is that the actual isn't an adding of the ideal to the real, or of thought to matter, as if we had prior separate experiences of the ideal and the real and somehow brought them into relation with each other subsequently. Miller's claim, on which his entire position stands or falls, is that both the ideal and the real appear thanks to the actual. "Both assured form and assured content derive from actuality." In an important sense this isn't idealism—as opposed to realism—at all. It is a way beyond the idealist-realist controversy. The ideal and the real are mediated through the functioning object.

Through a complex series of arguments, Miller is able to show how the functioning object or actuality enables us to generate, to distinguish between, and properly to interrelate appearance and reality, error and fact, contingency and formal order, purpose and cause, mind and body, even the humanities and the sciences. These arguments comprise the most adequate resolution of which I am aware of the still-vexing problems posed by Cartesian dualism. If it is at all true, as is often suggested, that the philosophical dilemmas of the last three centuries are primarily the consequence of Cartesian formulations, Miller's concept of the midworld of functioning objects deserves an important place in the history of modern philosophy. One index of a fruitful philosophical concept lies in its enabling us to see a whole range of other notions in a new light; and in the course of these volumes, such light is shed on many problematic notions, such as stimulus and response, freedom, fate, the moral, democracy, law, the accidental, sign and symbol, myth, quality, organism, intersubjectivity.

I do not know whether these volumes will gain the place due them, or whether they will receive only limited notice and then be forgotten. If the latter, it would be a serious mistake. For those steeped in the problems of the post-Kantian philosophical situation and faced by the specter of nihilism—which may be all of us—Miller offers a response that is original and positive without being idiosyncratic or uncritical. In my judgment, we find in Miller's thought a compelling answer to the question of what remains of philosophical idealism once it is freed of its rationalistic excesses, its claims to absoluteness—excessive claims that still haunt Husserl's transcen-

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dental idealism. After reading Miller, it is necessary to say that Marx, Nietzsche, and the existentialists have only tempered the claims of idealism, not destroyed them. Miller has demonstrated the original and ineliminable role of freely proposed categories in the constitution of human experience, but as *actual* conditions of objectivity rather than as subjective, idiosyncratic, or fictive bars to knowledge. The manner in which Miller has reconciled the claims of mind and its ideality with the claims of nature and its reality makes him one of the more provocative successors of Kant and Hegel. If his way of talking takes some getting used to, what he says is thoroughly contemporary. If he rejects all metaphysical claims of transcending history and its contingency, he nonetheless shows science to be possible. I know of no saner *via media* between skeptical relativism and metaphysical certitude. His arguments will by turns remind the reader of Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Peirce, Dewey, and Kuhn, but he is in the end an American original.

Gauls, Gauloises, and Baguettes

THE FRENCH. *By Theodore Zeldin. Pantheon. $17.95.*

Reviewed by EUGEN WEBER

Theodore Zeldin has written one of the best histories of recent France, and certainly the most original (*France, 1848–1945,* Oxford). Its special characteristic was its *pointillisme,* the depiction of an immensely varied reality by the accumulation of particular details to convey the impression less of a whole than of many parts, overlapping or imbricated, each interesting in itself. His new book drives in that earlier point. Looking for the French nation, what he found was "a multitude of microworlds and, even more, great diversity of individual behavior." To a paraphrase of Montesquieu's question "How can one possibly be French?" Zeldin would answer: one cannot. No more than one can possibly be "British." He would rather adopt, I suspect, and adapt Rochefort's famous crack of the mid-nineteenth century, that France contains thirty-six million subjects (fifty-four million in 1983), not counting the subjects of discontent. So, *The French,* which is a mine of information, brings no definition of national character (a notion Zeldin rejects as outdated and flawed), no generalization about French society or mentality (except that they are not one but many); it brings, rather, the illustration of Zeldin's experience that there are numerous, different, French worlds and no generalization about any of them can be more than a half-truth at best.

Stereotypes are punctured page after page, from berets (worn only in the Basque country until the 1920s, largely abandoned in the 1950s after three decades of popularity and a disastrous sartorial association with Vichy) to the lucidity of the French tongue. Rivarol asserted nearly two hundred years ago that what isn't clear isn't French. But that was before the French discovered the ineffable possibilities of German philosophy; and now obscurity and gibberish are widespread and appreciated. So are cartoons, which, at least, are clearer; and Zeldin, who likes their wit, gives us a broad selection that further illustrates his view of France as a country composed of many small republics at war with each other using sneers as missiles.

This last provides a hint of the commonality Zeldin denies: the French have a civil war in common, as well as the *baguette;* and one wonders how, despite the author's keen eye for revealing detail, his chapter on "how to laugh at their jokes" has steered away from wit when used as armament by an irascible race. Poking fun can consist mainly of poking or mainly of fun. In the French case, it is the former that predominates, taking the term in its offensive sense. Anglo-Saxon readers deserve a special warning against confusing French brands of humor with their own. Whereas Anglo-Saxons traditionally tend toward self-mockery, the derision illustrated in this book is more acerbic than amiable, less comforting than contentious. Scoffing at others, not at self, it serves as necessary equipment—dart, rapier, or bludgeon, sometimes shield—in daily tussle or combat with one's fellows.

Zeldin believes that the French share little

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beyond their speech. He does not seem to notice national pride, or its close cousin, xenophobia; nor does he cast a glance at the propensity for suspicion, envy, infighting, and aggressive defensiveness that goes with living in France, especially in its capital. Yet, in the absence of an average Frenchman, the reader looking for recurring traits as he turns the pages may be struck by the strong tendency toward mistrust and the high value placed on that special kind of gumption called *débrouillardise:* the ability to handle the difficulties that hedge one about.

Perhaps elective affinities are significant only at the individual level. But conditioned disparities and social relations marked by sharp hostilities seem to deserve more attention than they are given here—which is none. When so much has been said to suggest that French character is one and identifiable, and so much has been done to make it so, Zeldin's insistence on heterogeneity comes as a useful counteragent. In Zeldin's house there are many mansions. The massive monument reveals a warren of apartments. But if there is room in it for so many different identities, why not for national identity too? After a while, the ingenious argument takes on a slightly disingenuous air. If national identity is a myth, it seems to be one held by lots of the French who define themselves not only against each other, but also, and more so, against those who are not French—and hence either inferior or threatening or both. The French may not like each other, but they want to live in France and, when they leave it, dream only of coming home. There must be something "French" that they feel in common, even if it is not easy to recognize.

It may be that that something bears upon the aspirations and frustrations related to the Great Revolution's call for Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity: appealing in theory, contradictory in practice, a disconcerting source of anticipation and of bafflement. What does Zeldin tell us has become of it? Liberty consists of turning the law, which is done with deft frequency. Zeldin does not bother to mention the national sport of avoiding taxes, in which salaried personnel, increasingly numerous, have trouble in taking part. He gives a more subtle example: the most publicized of

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all French laws, that of July 29, 1881 (*défense d'afficher*), which forbids putting up notices on walls but makes no mention of lamp posts or of drainpipes, which have become free hoardings for scores of little ads.

Equality does not prevent a school from having three separate dining rooms for its teachers so that those with higher degrees, ordinary degrees, and no degrees can eat separately. Since "external signs of wealth" have long been taxed in France, the rich have learned to be rather more discreet and a good deal more private than in many countries—something that fits the (dare I say it?) national inclination to secretiveness. But theoretical equalitarianism has not scotched *nobiliaire* pretensions: of the twelve thousand noble families that existed in 1789, only four thousand survive, but ten times that number carry noble titles. As for fraternity, better forget it. Most French do.

There may be no French national character, but even Zeldin recognizes a certain French national pride, increasingly bruised and soured. Foreign multinationals own about one-fifth of France's industry, but that is the most dynamic fifth: business machines, oils, chemicals, agricultural equipment, precision instruments. Paris, which used to be the cultural and artistic center of the West, has been dethroned by New York (and, for the theater, by London) and relegated to the provincial status it long ascribed to its own provinces. Not all the French cheeses piled on top of each other can conceal the American-style jib of the Montparnasse tower or of *la Défense;* not all the Périer can wash away the bitterness of finding oneself invaded, overborne: *on n'est plus chez soi!* Versailles was restored to its former glory by American money; the Opera was placed in the hands of a Swiss, and the Museum of Modern Art managed by a Swede; foreigners have designed even more execrable public projects than the French have done. Pleased enough to recall the glorious days when French was spoken and Paris fashions were copied from Moscow to Lisbon, and beyond, the French now grumble about Franglais and demand that their language be protected like an endangered species.

Meanwhile, just over 2 percent of French household expenses go to "cultural" activities (ever the hobby of the middle classes), while ten times that much is spent on other distractions. Nor do the French read very much, which is not surprising in a nation where only one-quarter of those who leave primary school are judged capable of reading with any fluency. H. G. Wells once wrote that history is a race between education and catastrophe. It's hard to know what history is now that education *is* catastrophe—in France as elsewhere. A limited number of French read a great deal. Statistically speaking, though, the French read less than the British, the Germans, or the Japanese. On the other hand, they keep more and more pets (the incidence of pets attacking people is quite low), and in this respect, too, they are becoming more like Americans, who count more pets than people.

Montesquieu declared that, if man is a social animal, Frenchmen were more human than most, because more sociable. If this was so in the eighteenth century, it has changed since. Zeldin tells us that the average Frenchman (averages are admitted when they come in the guise of statistics) spends half his time alone without speaking (he also spends one day in the hospital every six months, goes to court once every four years, and dies of heart trouble at sixty-nine). The *gauloise* outlives her man by several years, which we might expect; but she is not nearly as chic as some may think if they haven't been to France lately: a quarter of French women never wear makeup at all, 35 percent hardly ever, and only one in ten goes to the hairdresser every two weeks.

France is also the country where people spend the smallest proportion of their income on clothes. Given the price of clothes and their overall mediocrity, the temptation is low and the deterrence high. As for haute couture (founded by Worth, an Englishman), it works for very few, is heavily patronized and subsidized by foreigners, and derives most of its income from the sale of perfumes made and sold by others, chiefly Americans: Cardin by Shulton, Carven by Scripps-Cochran, Balmain by Revlon, Saint-Laurent by Charles of The Ritz, itself a subsidiary of E. R. Squibb. Only Dior looks to a French firm: Moët-Hennessy.

Rewards and prestige are still concentrated in Paris, and the more successful you are in Paris, the more time you are entitled to stay away from it for longer and longer weekends spent in country properties that the present government is setting out to tax. But if cen-

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tralization remains strong, local government is surprisingly powerful and intense. France has 468,000 municipal councillors (2 percent of its electorate is itself elected), participation in local elections is extremely high, and, since four out of five deputies and 93 percent of the senators also hold elected local office, local grievances get attention in Paris, and local officials know how to handle or outflank national measures.

France used to be, or was thought to be, a nation of peasants ruled by city folk. Over the last thirty years, agricultural workers have dropped from 25 percent to 10 percent of the active population, and full-time farmers account for only 7 or 8 percent of it—not very different from American figures. As in America, though, even the peasants are not peasants anymore. For one thing, they are almost as heavily subsidized as they are heavily mortgaged. For another, they live and work on the farm or in the village but do their shopping and seek their entertainment in the small town nearby. So, while the city folk have grown in numbers, those living in the country and in small towns with a population below 15,000 continue to account for better than two French in five. In addition, one family in six owns a second residence: country cottage, apartment at the seaside, or ski resort. So there are days, and times of the year, when there are as many city people in the country as there are country folk, and the difference between the two is disappearing fast.

Except for one thing: in towns under ten thousand, people are very satisfied with their authorities, even their bureaucrats; in towns over twenty thousand, they are very dissatisfied with them. Which brings us to the vexing question of bureaucracy, and this turns out to be as complex and contradictory as everything else. One French man or woman in five seems to work for the state. Most of them don't work very hard or very efficiently, but it keeps some of them from delinquency and all of them off the dole. Zeldin shows that, though uncivil servants seem to be everywhere, this is not peculiar to France. Bureaucracy and a large public sector have spread through most Western countries, and France is no different in this respect from her neighbors, where bureaucracy is also regarded both as a source of oppression and nagging and as a means of rising in the social scale.

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By Joaquin Miller

With Historical Introduction by Alan Rosenus

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In any case, Zeldin suggests, the French have learned from history to accept government interference. I would modify that to say that they have learned to expect such interference, and sometimes to solicit it, but they accept it only in the sense that one accepts bad weather: with ill grace. One may observe, it's true, that on May 10, 1981, under the pouring rain, the happy crowd that celebrated Socialist victory at the polls also shouted, "Mitterand, du soleil!" At any rate, long historical experience with intrusive government has trained the French to manipulate or to outflank such interference. It has also (though this is beginning to change) left a legacy of individual inertia in public matters, where the dominant slogans still seem to be: *sauve-qui-peut* and *après moi le déluge*. Such traditions would make things easier for the new generation of managers and technocrats—who are only the old managers and technocrats computerized, their dream of "ruling France like a department store" merely an updated version of ruling it like a kingdom—if so many of the technocratic elite didn't keep going over to the other side to teach private individuals and private businesses how to protect themselves against the state. But if the difference between France and its neighbors does not lie in numbers or in its kind of bureaucrats, one may ask whether perhaps it lies in the spirit in which bureaucratic power is exercised: in England good-naturedly, in France mercurially, often meanly.

In France, as Sartre said, hell is other people. And, while Zeldin does not address that assertion directly, his pages permit frequent glimpses of "those French people who dislike French people," as did General de Gaulle, and Clemenceau before him, who loved France but not the French. Tourists who think the French are rude and nasty should remember that they have practiced on each other all their lives and that snapping at foreigners is incidental (and subsidiary) to the more general Franco-French war from which many—as Zeldin shows—seek to escape by shutting themselves off into narrow family circles (many have no friends at all outside their families). Such effort meets with only limited success, it would appear, since three-quarters of the women interviewed in a recent poll claimed that they had married not for love but simply to get away from home.

We learn from Zeldin that a quarter of all children in kindergartens of the Paris region (the countryside appears no better off) are referred to psychiatrists as having something wrong with them; that parents conjure fears in their children ("fear is life"); that the school system is set up so that most children are marked as failures of some sort; that the two million alcoholics and the three million "excessive drinkers" about to turn into full-fledged alcoholics cost the country more than education and justice cost together (wine is less heavily taxed than soft drinks); that all these people are not very jolly (the French Academy only admitted *humor* as a French word in 1932, a little prematurely perhaps). "Life is not funny," says a professional wit—certainly not in France, where the most widespread complaint today is tiredness. In 1977, three-fifths of French women and two-fifths of French men suffered from *fatigue*. One might add some percentage points for nerves. General practitioners say that they don't really know what is wrong with three-quarters of their patients, but they have about eighty-five hundred medicines they can prescribe to them (and do, in industrial quantities, paid for by the state), to be dispensed by prosperous pharmacists whose course of study (seven years long says Zeldin; I rather think four) includes seventy hours of instruction in pharmacology. After all this, Zeldin rejects the traditional image of the French as constipated and opts instead for multiple schizophrenia. "It seems that the abnormal are now firmly in the majority." One must conclude that they represent the norm.

Zeldin quotes Alain Sarfati, a relatively decent architect, to the effect that "home is the last refuge of liberty." But what he tells us about French homes, half of which have been built since 1945, shows them as neither comfortable nor free. People want single-family houses; architects want to create monuments that will commemorate their genius—or, at least, their monumentality. At last count, the architects are winning. Only one-third of the French enjoy single-family houses, compared to nearly half the Germans, 76 percent of the Americans, and 78 percent of the British. Le Corbusier, "the most famous French architect of this century" (actually a Swiss), promoted "machines for living," which neither functioned efficiently nor allowed those in them to

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live comfortably. Sarfati calls Le Corbusier a "terrorist" for his dogmatic and disciplinarian style. I see him as conformist and unimaginative, determined, as so many intellectuals are, to force people to live not as they want, but as they should.

More and more people in France these days are trying to live as they would like. This is a major theme of Zeldin's book, and he is right. But the resourceful pursuit of happiness that Zeldin illustrates with a long series of lively examples does not seem to reconcile most of his subjects to existence or to help the French much to a productive life. A majority of the French apparently believes that hard work makes for success, but the economy is set up to discourage work and enterprise. The last thirty years have seen a drastic fall in the number of working hours, and a concomitant decline in the number of working days. During the month of May, when this is being written, most working French may expect to work nineteen days. The school year is shorter than in any Western country. The official vacation entitlement is five paid weeks each year. An awful lot of people spend their time planning their vacations, when they are not actually taking them—which is why the recent government restrictions on foreign travel have raised such a stink, and why, when you call a business or an administration, you're likely to find your normal interlocutor away on holiday.

The working week, now at thirty-nine hours, is being reduced by one hour per week per year, to thirty-five. Retirement begins at age sixty, which is only fair to those who have spent many years in dreary drudgery. But, since so many French stop working earlier than workers in other nations (twice as many Americans as French are still at work after sixty-five), this, too, poses economic problems. No wonder productivity is falling and the economy is in a bad way (all blamed on the Americans, the Germans, and the Japanese). The more's the pity, since tempers that had relaxed a bit in the fat 1960s have become tense again in these last hard years of soaring unemployment and insecurity. The French can be generous as well as charming (though neither trait threatens to become a national affliction); but, says Jean Daniel, the editor of

With Pleated Eye and Garnet Wing

Symmetries of Italo Calvino

by I. T. Olken

The University of Michigan Press
Dept. OL P.O. Box 1104 Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

Olken writes that "It is always the writer who deeply embeds burning national cultural facts in a universally common context who best reflects the texture of his time." With this in mind, she looks to post-World War II Italy and to the work of writer Italo Calvino. "There was a literary backlash in the late 1950s and 1960s, after the short-lived wave of exceedingly stark realism," she writes. "Some awaited, or at least hoped for, another D'Annunzio to laud the superiority and power of a new Italic mystique and aggressive national ethos. Instead, Calvino appears with his highly ironic smile and an acrobatic narrative agility that had not been seen in Italian literature for centuries . . . ." Join Olken in an examination of Calvino's work, one which emphasizes the structure, patterns, and themes through which he has expressed himself.

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the *Nouvel Observateur*, it's hard to be generous from a position of weakness. Hence the chauvinism—not new but more pronounced since things started to go badly—and the private spite sharpening into public execration of those who are better off.

Those who do well for themselves have either successfully negotiated the competitive educational system or avoided it. Progressing through this book, with its host of interviews and life histories, one is struck by the number of successful entrepreneurs, scientists, or public figures who dropped out of school, at least at first. But lack of education is no infallible recipe for success—witness the four or five million ill-educated, philoprogenitive immigrants who never got a piece of the ink and whose children seem destined for similar discrimination and lower-classness. Significantly, the chapter where all this is discussed is entitled: "How they treat foreigners and Jews."

Zeldin likes the French. (So do I. As Joe E. Brown said to Jack Lemmon: "Nobody's perfect.") Zeldin appreciates the "obstinate unpredictability of individuals," their wily capacity to resist uniformity and conformity. He relishes their culture, which, in a charming phrase, he likens to a rich cake where each bite reveals a multiplicity of contrasting flavors. He gives his readers good value, along with an excellent bibliography should they want to press further. And his chapters can be read with pleasure, in almost any order one likes.

Portrait of the Portraitist

VAN DYCK. *By Christopher Brown. Cornell University Press. $48.50.*

Reviewed by RICHARD WENDORF

Anthony Van Dyck has for many years appeared to be the odd man out of European painting. In part, at least, the critical limbo in which he has been placed reflects the unusual shape of his artistic career. Born into a prosperous Antwerp merchant family in 1599, Van Dyck might be said to have pursued—and celebrated—prosperity during his entire life. He quickly progressed from the early commissions available to him in his native city to the aristocratic patronage of Genoa, eventually returning to Antwerp for several years, and finally migrating to the English court of Charles I, who knighted him and made him his Principal Painter in Ordinary. But in spite of his artistic precociousness and mature accomplishments, Van Dyck remained both early and late within the shadow cast by his great contemporary, Rubens, who was his friend, onetime employer, and fellow Flamand. Naturally gifted with considerable technique and with tremendous energy, he was eager, like Rubens, to make his name in historical painting; but he was impelled, perhaps by Rubens—and surely by a sense of his own talents—to turn primarily to portrait painting, long thought to be a subordinate genre to which only a few masters had devoted their talents. It is as a brilliant portraitist, of course, that Van Dyck made his mark. But even during the last year of his life, when he had the greatest English royal connoisseur as his patron, we find him traveling back and forth between Antwerp, Paris, and London, attempting to procure that one commission which would allow him to be compared with the great artists on whom he had modeled his own life's work.

The clearly demarcated divisions in Van Dyck's career—and perhaps the ambivalence we sense in his own character as an artist—therefore suggest some of the difficulties we encounter in summarizing his achievement as a painter. As Jakob Rosenberg argued in his landmark study of Rembrandt, we tend to look for a satisfactory shape to an artist's career, ideally emcompassing years of apprenticeship and aesthetic innovation, followed by a period of maturity in which the painter exercises his control over the province of his art, and culminating in those final years in which even these accomplishments are overshadowed by the introspection and freedom that old age affords. Judged by these norms, Van Dyck's career seems curiously wanting. The four distinct periods in which scholars have divided his work were heavily influenced by the different environments in which he painted, and his attempt to consolidate his reputation was cut short by his death at the age of forty-two.

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Even his impressive accomplishments at each stage in his career have been treated with some suspicion: how could the young painter who was the right person to celebrate the rich merchant society of Genoa in the 1620s return with such success to portraying the sober countenances of Antwerp and then, just as effortlessly, capture the aristocratic melancholy of the Caroline society at Whitehall, Greenwich, and Oatlands? Van Dyck appears to have been almost too adaptable for his own good.

It is no wonder, then, that we have had difficulty in seeing the man whole, and modern scholarship sharply reflects this dilemma. It may come as a shock to some to realize that the last comprehensive study of Van Dyck to appear in English—an elaborate tribute by Sir Lionel Cust and naturally weighted toward the English Van Dyck—was published in 1900. More recent work has emphasized particular aspects of the artist's career, and with encouraging results. Several essays have attempted to sort out Van Dyck's debt to iconographical sources—that is, the extent to which the naturalistic qualities in his portraits have been combined with traditional emblems, backgrounds, and poses. The young Van Dyck has been the subject of articles and of a substantial catalogue, and his work as a religious painter has received careful attention in a recent exhibition at Princeton University. Each of these studies, however, while providing new information and a more solid basis on which to admire Van Dyck's varied productions, still stands in need of a more encompassing—and more compelling—account of Van Dyck's general achievement as a painter.

Christopher Brown's elegant study of Van Dyck, therefore, appears at a particularly ripe moment, having, as it does, the fanfare of the "Van Dyck in England" exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery behind it. In organizing his book, Brown has followed the traditional fourfold division of the artist's career, but he has simultaneously made this a convincing schema by emphasizing the continuity and development we find in the artist's works. Brown's strength as a writer is immediately apparent in his clear and engaging prose and in his enviable ability to provide lively and unobtrusive thumbnail sketches of appropriate background material. (Particularly suc-

The Yale Review

Autumn 1983/Winter 1984: "The Telling of Lives"

The Autumn 1983 and Winter 1984 issues of *The Yale Review* are devoted to the uses of biography and autobiography in fiction, poetry, history, literary criticism, and ethnography.

The list of contributors to "The Telling of Lives" includes Daniel Aaron, Robert Coles, Terrence Des Pres, Erik H. Erikson, Seamus Heaney, John Hersey, R.W.B. Lewis, James Olney, Arnold Rampersad, Jonathan Spence, and C. Vann Woodward.

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cessful are his accounts of studio practice in the early seventeenth century, his short history of Antwerp, and his treatment of the genial specter of Rubens.) In commenting on the numerous portraits, Brown has carefully gauged just how much biographical information is pertinent to a specific canvas; additional information is often included within the annotation of the plates, an imaginative and efficient procedure (the reproductions themselves are of a high quality).

Because Cust tended to stress the English Van Dyck, Brown has decided to devote "relatively more space to his years in Flanders and Italy." And while there is little that is new in his chapter on the English period, Brown's discussion of Van Dyck's final eight years is satisfying precisely because it follows from his analysis of Van Dyck's development as an artist (Brown also includes a large number of color plates here). Brown shows how most of the characteristic qualities of the painter's work—the interest in surface texture, the use of a relatively shallow picture space, the juxtaposition of figures in dynamic poses, the tendency toward an aristocratic elongation of features—were securely intact when Van Dyck first arrived in London in 1632. Brown provides an equally convincing sense of continuity by pointing out how often—and how late—Van Dyck continued to turn for fresh motifs to his Italian sketchbook, which reflected his absorption of Titian. He presents several interesting comparisons between Titian's designs and Van Dyck's compositions as well as the most penetrating discussion we now have of Van Dyck's affinities with and divergences from Rubens.

The limitations in this study, such as they are, spring from the wide scope and necessarily fast pace of the book. Brown has something interesting and fresh to say about almost every picture that is reproduced, but no single analysis is as complete as it might be. This means that some important topics are eventually left insufficiently covered, such as Van Dyck's handling of iconographical material, especially at the English court. In general, I agree with Brown's persistent view that Van Dyck was willing to make use of iconographical motifs suggested to him by his sitters but was not naturally inclined to follow this practice on his own. In the beautiful portrait of *Henrietta Maria, with her Dwarf Sir Jeffrey Hudson,* however, which Brown reproduces in color but with little critical commentary and no mention of recent iconographical work, we must ask ourselves whether the intricate symbolic scheme of the painting derives from the painter, from the queen, or from the general aesthetic doctrine that pervaded the Caroline court. This leads, in turn, to the equally tricky question of whether Van Dyck stamped his own pictorial image on the court or whether this remarkable series of canvases reveals only his inherent adaptability, his absorption of the artistic tastes of his time. Perhaps these are questions that cannot be satisfactorily answered without the kind of secondary material that is currently lacking, but they are surely issues that might be pursued more thoroughly than Christopher Brown pursues them here.

In his commentary on a similar painting of the same year, *Self-Portrait with a Sunflower* (1633), Brown attempts to arbitrate between competing iconographic interpretations. Is the chain that the painter wears around his neck merely an emblem of royal devotion (like the sunflower to which he points), or is it also a symbol of the art of painting itself? Brown argues for the more "naturalistic" reading: "Van Dyck shows himself here as a courtier and not as a painter. The gold chain is a real one and not the symbolic chain in which *Pictura* is shown in Ripa's emblem." I am sympathetic with Brown's interpretation of the chain, which had been presented to the artist by the king, but it strikes me that a thoroughly naturalistic analysis of this painting would show that the artist *does* picture himself as a painter here, or at least as much as he ever allowed himself to be in his numerous self-portraits. Van Dyck points to the sunflower with his right forefinger extended, in the very gesture of painting itself; and his left hand, which delicately holds the links of the chain, is also posed as if it were holding a palette. The sunflower, which appears to be life-size, has a conspicuous brushlike sprout on its right side, and a careful inspection of the flower's "face" reveals that Van Dyck's features are clearly mirrored there. The sunflower, set against a clouded sky, therefore appears to be an actual canvas to which the painter draws our attention. Whether we approach the painting naturalistically or iconographically, in other words, we encounter an

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intriguing self-portrait *within* a self-portrait.

In a brief but suggestive final chapter, Brown traces Van Dyck's influence on the English painters that followed his lead—Lely, Gainsborough, Reynolds, and Lawrence—while also stressing the artistic heritage he left behind on the Continent. Here, as in the preceding chapters, Brown handles his biographical materials in a convincing and unobtrusive manner. He gleans what he can from the many anecdotes surrounding the painter, but in general treats them with proper caution. (He has clearly absorbed the lessons to be found in Kris and Kurz's *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist.*) The scholarly notes are unfortunately kept to a minimum and include at least one error (Brown confuses Jonathan Richardson the younger with his father). Because so much scholarship has been devoted to Van Dyck during the past twenty years, a more evaluative summary of the contents of these studies, including Erik Larsen's two-volume catalogue, would have proven useful. But for the most part, Brown's book provides much of what one could wish to have at the present time, and it is the best general study of Van Dyck's achievement we have. In its intelligent analysis of the major paintings, its lively and learned narration, and its compendium of relevant documents and historical hearsay, it should satisfy Van Dyck's admirers—and perhaps admonish his detractors. Inasmuch as Van Dyck can be presented whole, Brown has succeeded in this difficult task.

Self-Starter

SELECTED LETTERS OF P. T. BARNUM. *Edited by A. H. Saxon. Columbia University Press. $19.95.*

Reviewed by NEIL HARRIS

Almost one hundred years after his death, P. T. Barnum's hold on the popular imagination remains strong. Choreographers, playwrights, novelists, and scholars continue to find Barnum a source of curiosity or profit. No

NEIL HARRIS, professor of history at the University of Chicago, is the author of *Humbug: The Art of P. T. Barnum.*

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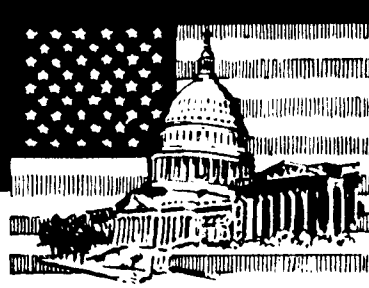

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showman in our history has exerted so consistent an appeal.

Why Barnum? There was, for one thing, his articulateness. Without much formal education Barnum took to exposition as if he were born to it. The only liquid that could never be carried to excess, Barnum explained, was printer's ink. While still in his midforties he published the first version (many would follow) of his autobiography. He flourished on the lecture platform. He advertised everywhere. He addressed the press. And he wrote letters, many of them in his own semi-legible hand. In this volume A. H. Saxon, a historian of entertainment who is currently at work on a biography of the showman, presents us for the first time with the epistolary Barnum, examples culled from fifty years of correspondence. Here, in more than three hundred separate items, Barnum writes friends, business partners, professional colleagues, museum directors, newspaper editors, clergymen, employees, politicians, and celebrities, mixing together advice, information, requests, and commands.

The letters are, in fact, the book. Saxon adds only a brief introduction, a chronology, a short essay on sources, and some brief annotations. These last are helpful, although some stop short of fulfilling expectations. When Barnum promises Edward Everett that he will print a letter by the Duke of Wellington, the reader might enjoy learning that the Iron Duke had just died, making the communication a bit more noteworthy. The mysterious Mr. Murphy, from whom Barnum seeks museum contributions in 1865, was probably William Walton Murphy, consul-general in Frankfurt. A note about Robert Hendershot, a drummer boy, would have been helped by a discussion of Barnum's attempt to exploit battlefield bravery during the Civil War. A few letters are simply puzzling. But, in general, Saxon's wish to stay out of Barnum's way and let the words speak for themselves is sound, and the well-chosen letters are, on the whole, self-explanatory.

What the letters reveal is another matter. Barnum's words were rarely as interesting as his actions, and the prose he inspired was usually better than the prose he originated. The correspondence is not notable for its epigrams or pithy descriptions, although Barnum could turn a good phrase. Nor do the letters reveal dark corners or embarrassing incidents, as Saxon readily admits. Given his half century of adventuring and the dozens of enterprises he managed, Barnum's files are disappointingly unsensational. Damaging or incriminating documents are long since gone.

It is not, then, his articulateness that explains Barnum's appeal. The earnestness of these letters, their lack of much self-doubt, suggests something else entirely. It was his intensity, his total commitment, his incessant careerism that make Barnum special—in addition, of course, to his extraordinary success. He was something of a new breed, a true believer in the unqualified value of self-promotion. His craving for popular approval and moral justification never stopped, for in him the public and the private man were rarely separated.

Thus the letters are permeated by preaching and stock philosophizing. To editors and curators, to whom he wrote continually in search of support, he emphasized his sincerity (with an underlining that might have made Queen Victoria jealous). It was his "great *desire* to do a *big thing* for the public & to make it quite unobjectionable to the most refined & moral," he wrote the business manager of the *New York Tribune* about his spectacle at the Hippodrome. "It is my *last* 'crowning effort.' " His reward would come from the effort of other managers to give "their patrons something *better*," and that was all he wished. The pieties were sustained further when he encouraged his secretary, H. E. Bowser, to take "more pleasure in saving than in spending," and advised him to seek only "real solid *comforts*, avoiding luxuries, extravagancies, & a desire to splurge & make a show. . . . We can't 'eat our cake & keep it.' " This, by one of the century's most extravagant publicists and outrageous consumers, whose middle name might have been excess.

In truth, Barnum's code of personal morality was strictly orthodox, however heterodox were some of its applications. He valued reputation and respectability, laboring to get his public commitments recognized. "The fact is," he wrote Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "I am not, nor never was, half so cute nor cunning nor *deep* as many persons supposed. . . ." Financial success, he maintained, resulted simply from "doing with all my

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might whatever I undertake," and never resting content with half measures.

The correspondence also permits glimpses of a more homely and intimate Barnum: planning gifts for Tufts University, surprising his aged mother with a new water closet (attached to her house), dashing off affectionate notes to a favorite great-grandson. But all this is overshadowed by the competitive, energetic businessman, ever on the prowl for better exhibits and new ways of capitalizing on celebrity, calamity, or even fame, in the interests of greater profit and glory. This is the Barnum capable of innovative exaggeration (and even ordinary duplicity) in dealing with creditors or rivals, and the Barnum who lectured his staff on the virtues of discipline and obedience. "Every person I employ needs to be kept prompt to his work," he wrote his secretary, and "all who owe must be made to pay promptly."

The coexistence in Barnum of the moralizing entertainer who saw himself as a Promethean bringer of pleasure to a work-haunted community, and the scheming promoter, the peddler of hokum, the huckster of hucksters, has fascinated later chroniclers. The relationship between the two Barnums is a subtle one. For Barnum was no fraud. He could no more have cheated blatantly, the *Saturday Review* pointed out at his death, than the "croupier at Monte Carlo," given the blaze of publicity always surrounding him. But he did seem awfully suspicious at times.

In the 1920s and 1930s, when Sigmund Freud and Sinclair Lewis were reshaping explanations of the American business ethic, Barnum exerted a special attraction. He seemed almost pathological. Gamaliel Bradford included him in his collection of *Damaged Souls* (along with Benedict Arnold, John Brown, and Aaron Burr), as one of those who "lived for the most part outwardly, expanded, enlarged, engrossed," projecting "their personalities upon the world about them," and owning neither the "inclination nor the ability to dissect their own spirit with intense and curious questioning." At about the same time Constance Rourke created, in prose, a Barnum living amidst crowds, on platforms, satisfying a "lust for magnitude"—a sense of scale "which would soon overwhelm the American mind."

Today, psychoanalyzing Barnum seems less

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important than recalling what he actually managed to accomplish. He created an almost numberless series of national icons, from Tom Thumb and Jumbo to the fantastic success of the Jenny Lind tour and The Greatest Show on Earth. But his close association with the circus has eclipsed the variety of his feats. This is partly because of the circus's continuity, and partly because Barnum's supreme effort to capture public attention, his autobiography, has never regained the popularity it enjoyed during his own lifetime. It is still in print, but no longer widely read. Like the letters, the autobiography is dominated by optimistic moralizing, not a quality that gives memoirs a hold on the contemporary world. The work is fascinating in its details, but not totally successful in its defense of Barnum's self. "You know I had rather be laughed *at* than not to be noticed at all—showwise or perhaps *otherwise*," Barnum wrote Mark Twain. Ironically enough, the quintessential packager of amusements was unable to package his own life for the long duration. Despite his quest for status as a moral uplifter, whose arena could just as well have been religion or social reform, Barnum today remains laden with the overtones of a Hollywood trickster, a carnival monger in the mold of W. C. Fields or Wallace Beery (who played him in the cinematic version of his life). However unfair, it is what mass entertainment and selective memory have done with his career.

What these letters do is reaffirm Barnum's sincerity even while they suggest some of his self-delusions. They resemble nothing more than the world of *Nashville*, the Robert Altman movie caricature. The stern believer in civil liberties, Universalism, temperance, and abolition, who offers large sums to exhibit the petticoats Jefferson Davis wore to avoid capture, instigates vigilante-like assaults on Connecticut peace sympathizers in the 1860s, and threatens to sell his real estate holdings if the Democrats elected Grover Cleveland in 1884 (they did; he didn't). Barnum moved easily from entertainment to politics, pioneering a movement that has only grown stronger. In his life, Madison Avenue, Wall Street, Hollywood Boulevard, and even Pennsylvania Avenue all seem to converge. If the letters do little to change Barnum's image, they are also unlikely to reduce his appeal. And that appeal, in the end, is Merlin as Micawber, the magic maker as Mr. Everyman, whose longings for approval and concern for the conventions are stronger tributes to virtue than the messages of pulpit and schoolhouse. Barnum did, as he himself puts it, "eat our cake & keep it," and readers still want to find out how he managed to pull it off.

A Word to and from the Wise

THE OXFORD BOOK OF APHORISMS. *Compiled by John Gross. Oxford University Press. $15.95.*

THE CONCISE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF PROVERBS. *Edited by J. A. Simpson. Oxford University Press. $16.95.*

Reviewed by JACOB A. STEIN

The Faber Book of Aphorisms (published in the United States as *The Viking Book of Aphorisms*), edited by W. H. Auden and Louis Kronenberger, was published in England some twenty years ago. The *New Statesman* assigned the book to John Gross, whose review was a dazzling display of information about aphorists and the aphorism. Mr. Gross showed such an interest in the subject that one was led to suspect that he might have had an entry of his own in mind when he wrote his review. The suspicion is confirmed. We now have *The Oxford Book of Aphorisms*, with John Gross as the selector.

It is regrettable that Mr. Gross did not place his full erudition on the subject into a comprehensive prefatory survey of aphoristic literature—it would fill a gap. Only two have been done within a hundred years or more, and both are difficult to come by. There is John Morley's essay entitled "Aphorisms," in which he took his turn at defining the word and then traced its history and suggested what use could be made of aphoristic writing. He saw the aphorism as a special kind of knowledge. "They are the guiding oracles that man has found out for himself in the great business of ours, on learning how to be, to do, to do without, and to depart." Morley saw great value in the aphorism as the repository of the wisdom of preceding generations. Morley

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wrote many years ago, in 1887, when there was more confidence in the improvement of human nature by precept.

The other extended consideration of aphoristic literature is Logan Pearsall Smith's *Treasury of English Aphorisms*. It was published in 1947, and there is nothing more recent. Logan Pearsall Smith wished to demonstrate that, though it is in France that aphoristic writing has been most cultivated and is one of the minor arts of literature, the English have much to be proud of in this line. He noted that the French tradition began with the *Maximes* of La Rochefoucauld. His bow to La Rochefoucauld is obligatory. Anyone interested in aphorisms must deal with this lion in the path. Once having read La Rochefoucauld, self-love and many other things are never quite the same.

In Gross's too-brief introductory remarks, he acknowledges his considerable debt to previous anthologies. He strangely omits any mention of the Auden-and-Kronenberger collection, though he does include eleven of Auden's aphorisms in his book. One is worth repeating in the context of omission: "Some books are undeservedly forgotten, none are undeservedly remembered."

Gross explains his own method of selection by giving the definition of aphorism that he adopted, which follows Samuel Johnson's definition: "A maxim, a precept contracted in a short sentence; an unconnected position." *Maxim* is also a synonym in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Gross points out that an Oxford Book of Maxims would not sound particularly inviting. He chose aphorism.

Gross distributes his aphorisms under various headings. Some of the headings he uses are those that both Auden-and-Kronenberger and Logan Pearsall Smith used. It seems that aphorisms naturally collect around such general subjects as money, life, fame, reputation, ambition, and envy.

Although Gross has a section entitled "Self-Love," he includes only two selections from La Rochefoucauld, the master of the subject. Also included under "Self-Love" are the reflections of Samuel Johnson, Lord Chesterfield, Oscar Wilde, Sacha Guitry, and Anthony Powell. What a pleasure it would be to have these men gathered around a fire on a rainy night for a conversation on their favorite subjects.

John Gross has put together a book to be savored from time to time and to last a lifetime. It has many of the best things from the other collections and, here and there, something striking and new.

The difference between an aphorism and a proverb is suggested by Auden-and-Kronenberger, who hold that aphorisms are an aristocratic genre of writing. "The aphorist does not argue or explain—he asserts; and implicit in his assertion is the conviction that he is wiser or more intelligent than his readers. For this reason the aphorist who adopts a folksy style with 'democratic' diction and grammar, is a cowardly and insufferable hypocrite."

J. A. Simpson, the editor of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, defines a proverb as "a traditional saying which offers advice or presents a moral in a short and pithy manner." He identifies three main categories. First is the abstract statement expressing a general truth, such as, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." Second is the specific observation from everyday experience to make a point that has general application. For

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instance, "You can take a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." Third is the saying from a particular area of traditional wisdom and folklore. An example is, "After dinner, rest awhile, after supper, walk a mile."

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs is based on the second edition of *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* edited by Smith and Heseltine. The latter work carries a valuable essay of Janet E. Heseltine, in which she gives a history of proverbial wisdom and traces the rise and fall of the proverb. From her essay we learn that the Elizabethans liked to scribble proverbs into their commonplace books. It pleased them to have a collection of such sayings to turn to for their own reading. Bacon recommended the keeping of notebooks for formularies and elegancies—what Bacon called commonplaces—ready to be drawn upon when required.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs, resting as it does on *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, gives us the proverbial wisdom as it exists in English. There is no inclusion of the vast proverbial literature of Russia, China, and many other countries. Some years ago Khrushchev popularized the Russian proverb. Satirists quickly coined Russian proverbs that sounded grave and wise but were in fact meaningless. "While three wise men can pull a troika, a fool can be eating kasha." "If God wanted us to go to concerts, he would have given us tickets." These all now sound rather Woody Allenish.

The Concise Oxford is a handy reference that gives the history of the use of the proverb with examples of the earliest use and the latest use. It is also useful as a sampler. No doubt about it, the reading of a dozen or more of the proverbs makes one feel much wiser. Perhaps it is this feeling that prompts people to collect proverbs and books of proverbs. Many years ago I was obsessed by a desire to collect every book I could find about proverbs. During one buying spell in New York, I was told in bookstore after bookstore that the books on proverbs had been purchased a few days earlier by Colonel DeGuinzbourg. Then one day I read in the *New York Times* that a Colonel DeGuinzbourg had published a book of proverbs. I sent for a copy and found it quite interesting. It has many proverbs that are not included in *The Concise Oxford*, and it is worldwide in its scope. One of the proverbs that is included is a Turkish proverb: "The explanation is often worse than the blunder itself." Colonel DeGuinzbourg followed the proverb with this story:

In the old days a king known for his cruelty, demanded that his court jester illustrate, within the hour, the meaning of the above proverb or be tortured to death.

As the king and his queen, attired in royal robes, were some time later slowly mounting a staircase, the jester stole behind them and gave the king a loving pinch. The king, with sword drawn, wheeled around and was about to decapitate the fool, who yelled, "Sorry, your majesty, I thought it was the queen!"

Can we really learn the great business of life by reading books such as those under review? There is here much wisdom on how to get on, how to evaluate others, and how to know thyself. All the big questions are looked at from many angles. But who learns without experience, without the pinch of reality? Perhaps one day pharmacology will supply what is missing, a pill that upon ingestion requires us to act on good advice.

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